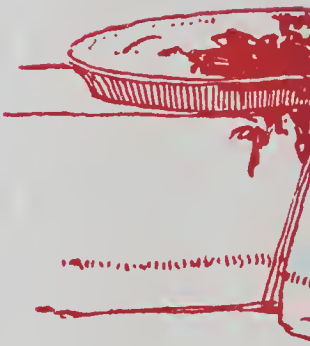
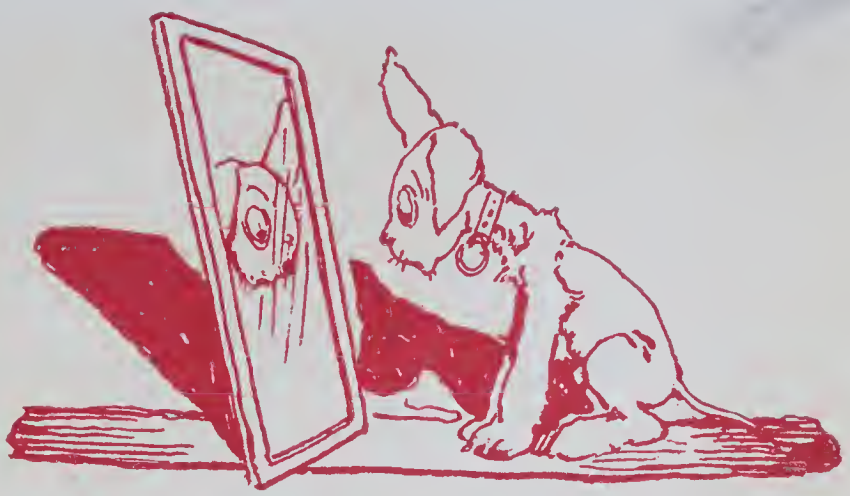
TUFFY BEAN AND THE LOST FORTUNE

BY LEO EDWARDS





Bobby Ross
from
Grandma B—

TUFFY BEAN AND THE LOST FORTUNE

1932.

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MELANCHOLY AND I HAD A CHAT

TUFFY BEAN AND THE LOST FORTUNE

BY

LEO EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF
THE POPPY OTT BOOKS
THE JERRY TODD BOOKS
THE ANDY BLAKE BOOKS
THE TRIGGER BERG BOOKS
THE TUFFY BEAN BOOKS

ILLUSTRATED BY
BERT SALG

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To

DUANE RUMPF

A very good friend of mine, who told me one time, with delightful boyish candor, that he'd dearly love to go to college and play football—"but darn the studying!" If he ever gets to be a college professor himself I dare say he'll promptly exchange the institution's textbooks for football manuals. But of such stuff are senators and village dog catchers made. So his is not a hopeless case.

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LEO EDWARDS' BOOKS

Here is a complete list of Leo Edwards' published books:

THE TUFFY BEAN SERIES

Tuffy Bean's Puppy Days
Tuffy Bean's One-Ring Circus
Tuffy Bean at Funny-Bone Farm
Tuffy Bean and the Lost Fortune

THE JERRY TODD SERIES

Jerry Todd and the Whispering Mummy
Jerry Todd and the Rose-Colored Cat
Jerry Todd and the Oak Island Treasure
Jerry Todd and the Waltzing Hen
Jerry Todd and the Talking Frog
Jerry Todd and the Purring Egg
Jerry Todd in the Whispering Cave
Jerry Todd, Pirate
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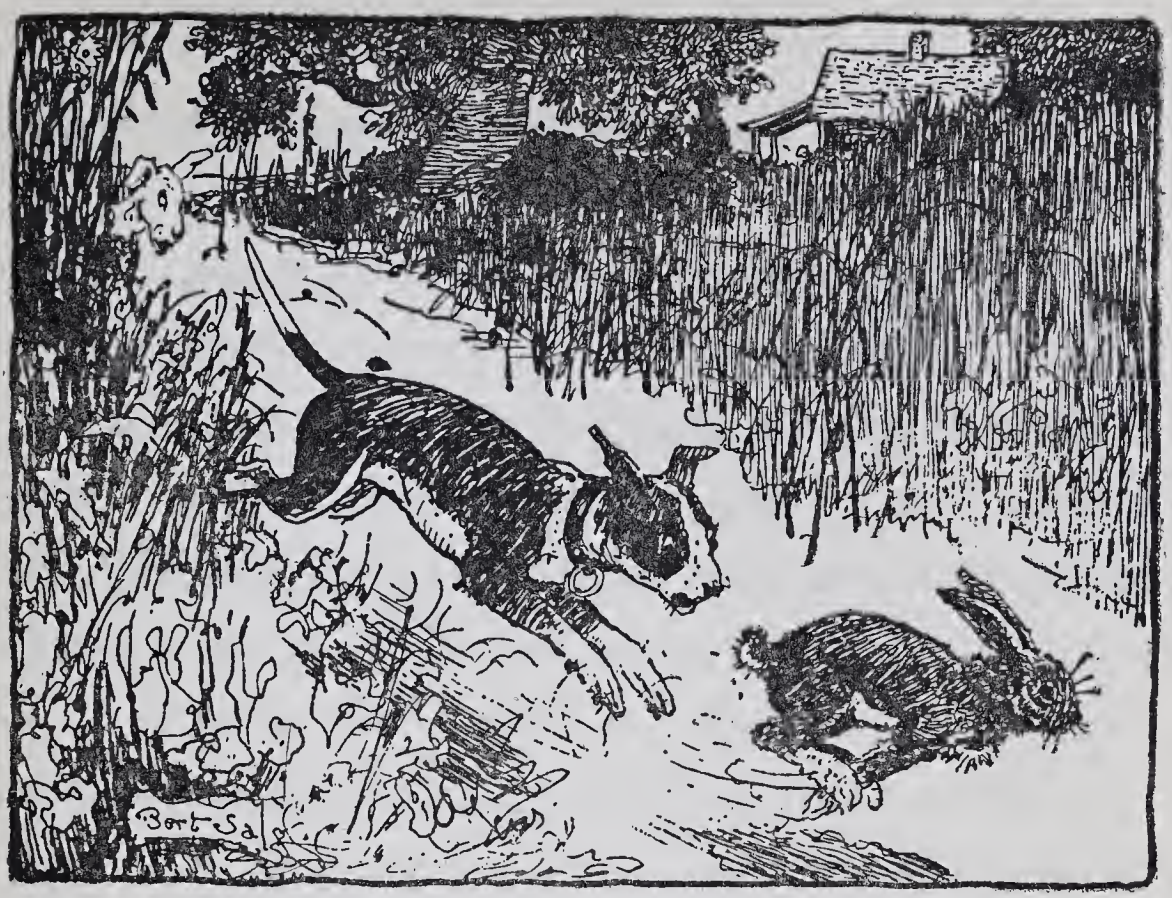


The rabbit gave me an excuse to skin out

TUFFY BEAN AND THE LOST FORTUNE

CHAPTER I

THE PROPOSED BATHHOUSE

MELANCHOLY was waiting for me on the lake shore. He's another dog like me. And as soon as I got a look at him, sad-eyed droopy-looking freak that he was, I knew he had another pain.

"It's my heart," says he weakly, when I questioned him.

"What's the matter with it?" says I wearily.

"It palpitates."

I was supposed to know what he meant. But I didn't. And rather than expose my ignorance I started talking about bullfrogs. Some were green, I said, and some ate mosquitoes. But Melancholy showed plainly enough by his abstracted manner that he had no interest in bullfrogs, whether they ate mosquitoes or not.

It was his story, as dished out to me at various times during our brief acquaintance, that he had been raised by a doctor. So naturally he *would* know a lot about aches and pains. But that hardly justified him in getting a new ailment every time he turned around. And at times, if you must know the truth, his continued laments got blamed tiresome.

In the preceding book of this series I described my home on the shore of Funny-Bone Lake. I was a farm dog. Melancholy, though, belonged to one of the summer residents, of which a number lived in colorful rustic cottages within a stone's throw of our small farm. These people frequently came to the farmhouse to buy

butter and eggs. We sold them milk, too. It was through the sale of such truck as berries and eggs, in season, that we made a living.

Nor did any of these wealthy summer residents, who passed and repassed our door many times a day in their expensive automobiles, know that we, too, used to be rich, with belongings of equal quality. For Aunt Judy, who headed the family, wasn't the kind to peddle her troubles throughout the neighborhood. Having lost her fortune in a land swindle she sensibly made the best of it, scarcely ever referring to it, even in the company of her dearest friends.

I first met her when she bought me from a hairy-necked tin peddler who, in turn, had stolen me from my home in the southern part of the state. Told that I was a coach dog, and getting my name from the fancy brass collar that I wore, she later presented me to her lively young nephew, who at that time was attending school in Milwaukee. Then, as I say, she lost her fortune, following which she and her orphaned charges moved to the country, where it would be easier, she figured, to earn a living.

Dave Mason, a steady, hard-working boy, was sixteen. Tod Mason, my master, was twelve. And Mary Jane, the youngest of the three children who had been given into the care of Miss Judith Mason by her dying brother, was ten.

Of the three I liked Tod the best. Dave was much too serious to suit me. And Mary Jane, at times, was entirely too fresh.

Aunt Judy, though, was wonderful. Gee! It's hard to imagine anybody who could have been more loving or more thoughtful than she. It was her nature, I guess. One time when I had a sore paw she got up in the middle of the night to bathe my foot in hot water. Think of that! As for the children, she couldn't do enough for them. So it isn't surprising that they were all wrapped up in her.

Dear old Aunt Judy! No matter what happens to me in later years I'll always remember her and love her. I'll always love the children, too, particularly Tod.

Mr. Bean was my first master. It was from him that I got both my name and my fancy brass collar. Then the old showman got hold of me.

I had loved them both, as a loyal dog should. But I loved Tod the best of all. I want to add, too, that it made me mighty happy to know that he loved me in return. Gee! Light-hearted skylarking lad that he was, he and I sure had a lot of fun on that old farm, with its adjacent fishing and hunting grounds.

When the blow fell, and the distressed family lawyer told Aunt Judy that she was penniless, due to unwise investments, she recalled the little abandoned farm that she earlier had purchased on the shore of Funny-Bone Lake. Peculiarly she never had seen the farm; and least of all had she suspected, in buying it to accommodate a destitute friend, that she'd ever live there.

But the little farm, with its low-roofed dwelling, productive strawberry patch and grassy knolls, meant a great deal to her now. It was home—the only home she had left. And while it lacked the many conveniences that she had been accustomed to in the city, where paid servants had done the housework, she was none the less happy and contented. Hard work, she often told the growing children, coupled with

thrifty planning, would provide the things that they needed.

The strawberry patch, as set out by a neighbor, gave them a good start. Then they built two rental boats. These boats really belonged to Tod and Dave, who planned, when winter came, to build two more. Also the family possessions included a Jersey cow, named Betsy, and a flock of hens, all of which had paid for themselves in addition to furnishing their owners with much-needed food.

Starting with four hundred dollars, her total capital, Aunt Judy now had over six hundred dollars in a country bank. Each added dollar that she put away strengthened her belief that she could continue to support her beloved family on the little farm and bring them up in the way that she wanted to bring them up. Dave talked earnestly of a law career. Tod, in his more serious moments, expressed the desire to be a doctor. This would take money. But the planning guardian, who rarely bought anything for herself, was confident that when the money was needed it would be forthcoming.

Here my attention was again drawn to Melancholy, who acted as though he had a hairbrush stuck in his throat.

"What's the matter now?" I inquired quickly.

"It's my esophagus," he further gurgled.

"Your *which?"* says I, letting out my neck.

"My esophagus," he repeated, rolling his expressive eyes.

As the saying is, I was getting no place fast.

"The anatomical esophagus," he then recited learnedly, "is the canal, or gullet, through which the food that we eat passes from the mouth to the stomach."

Plainly, I told myself, as I shoved a dizzy look at him, I was out of place in his company. So I decided to go home and hunt for fleas.

"So-long," says I, starting off.

"Wait a moment," he then separated himself from a final juicy gurgle, "and I'll go along."

"And you're sure," says I, giving him a sharp look, "that it won't be too much of a strain on your eppa-ma-glottas?"

Then, can you imagine it, he started telling me about his operation. Suffering cats! I was

glad when a rabbit crossed our path. For that gave me an excuse to skin out and leave him.

Down the hill I went, lickety-cut. But it was a wasted effort. For the scuttling rabbit gave me the slip, having hid itself, I dare say, under one of the numerous summer cottages.

On the way home I was attracted to the back porch of the Barlow cottage, frequently called "The Lighthouse," where Tod was washing the family poodle.

Then young Jimmy Walters came along.

"Where's your dog?" inquired Tod, referring to Melancholy.

"Over home," says Jimmy.

"Go get him," joked Tod, "and we'll give him a bath."

Always on the go in their expensive automobile, Mrs. Harry Barlow and her restless-eyed uneasy-acting husband frequently hired the Mason children to perform various odd jobs for them. Mary Jane had earned several dollars taking care of the Barlow baby, while Tod, in turn, had earned even more mowing the lakeshore lawn. This was the first time, though,

that he had been hired to wash the shielded family poodle.

And how I hated her, the snippy little brat!

Sensible dogs let their tails hang down behind. But Gertie superiorly carried hers on her back. And because she could curl it up, like a corkscrew, she thought that she was the whole cheese, with the ripe smell thrown in.

Having spent her entire life in a wealthy family it was her snippish idea that country dogs, who slept in ordinary hay beds, were the scum of the earth. And rarely did she speak to me when we met, much less act sociable. So I was glad when Tod carelessly got soap in her eyes.

"Where's Mrs. Barlow?" Jimmy then inquired.

"Over to the golf links."

"And does she know that you're washing her poodle?"

"Sure thing. I'm getting paid for it."

"How much?" came the eager inquiry.

"A quarter."

"I wish that I could earn money like you," the words were spoken enviously.

"*I* need it," was Tod's pointed reply.

"Pa says I'm lazy," came the frank confession.

Tod laughed.

"I've heard other people say the same thing."

But a little jab like that didn't offend Jimmy, whose way so far in life had been made easy by his father's wealth.

An author, Mr. Walters' summer home was one of the showiest on the lake shore. It was called "The Oaks." I often went there with Tod to play with Jimmy and his younger brother.

"Do you know what I'd like to do?" Jimmy then spoke with more spirit, having come to the conclusion, I guess, that there was just as much fun in working as there was in loafing.

"What?" grunted Tod, as he let the warm water trickle down Gertie's untangled tail.

"Start a bathhouse."

"For dogs?" laughed the worker, thinking of his own job.

Jimmy snorted.

"For *dogs!* Don't be silly. I mean a bathhouse where bathers could change their clothes."

Tod showed more interest.

"By George!" he cried, with sparkling eyes. "That's a real idea."

"Our garage," planned Jimmy, "would make a swell bathhouse."

"But where will your father keep his automobile?" came the puzzled inquiry.

"He's going away to-morrow. So the garage will be empty. And if we can show him when he gets home that we have a paying business I bet he'll be only too glad to build a bathhouse for us. It won't cost much. And all we'll need in addition to the building is service towels and baskets for the bathers' checked clothes."

"Hot dog!" cried Tod, with mounting enthusiasm.

"A lot of people would go in bathing on our side of the lake," proceeded Jimmy, "if they had a place to change their clothes. But they can't very well undress in the bushes."

"We let the boat renters use our barn," Tod informed.

"There you are!" came the triumphant cry. "The business is there if we go after it. And

why not? There's money in it. And pa will be tickled pink if we make a success of it. Lazy, huh? I'll show him when he gets home from his motor trip that I'm just as good a money-maker as he is."

"*And* how!" chimed in Tod, with equal enthusiasm.

So interested was he in the proposed new business that he forgot all about Gertie, who, having climbed out of the soapy tub, now took after a black tomcat.

It was her conceited idea, I guess, that she could easily crowd the cat into a corner and claw its tail off. But right there is where she made the biggest (and saddest!) mistake of her life. For what that peppy old tomcat did to *her* was just too bad.

Which, of course, was pie and ice cream to me. For I hate her, as I say. But I kind of sobered up when Mrs. Barlow suddenly appeared on the scene. For I knew how she pampered that goofy high-tailed pet of hers. And naturally she *would* blame Tod for starting the fight.

Gertie was now a dozen times dirtier than when she first entered the tub. On top of that, her face was covered with blood. And sincerely sorry for her plight, as she staggered into the open, Tod offered to give her another bath. But the outraged mistress told him furiously to leave the yard and never come back. He was like all the other boys, she said. He had no sense of responsibility.

Later the matter was reported to Aunt Judy, who, deeply regretful, took the supposedly guilty young nephew into her bedroom and lectured him soundly. I heard him defending himself. But his aunt was only partially convinced of his innocence. For she was well acquainted with his fun-loving ways.

It was thought that the Barlows would quit trading with us. But in time the matter blew over, though the old intimacy between our elder and the still indignant poodle owner never was resumed.

And now let me tell you what happened when Tod and Jimmy opened up their new bathhouse. Gosh! They sure got into a peck of trouble.

Next he destroyed the maid's Sunday hat

CHAPTER II

READY FOR BUSINESS

MELANCHOLY'S appearance in the lake-side colony had caused a lot of amused comment. The neighbors knew that Mr. Walters had promised to get Jimmy a dog. And they naturally expected to see a high-priced dog. But here instead was a flea-bitten chromo. Not only

did he droop at every corner, like a wilted cabbage leaf, but he had the biggest feet and the longest face that I ever saw on any kind of a bone-guzzler, Alabama hounds included. Add to that a skimpy rat-like tail and mismatched ears. His ribs, too, stuck out like the ripples in a washboard.

But most noticeable of all were his big forlorn-looking eyes. Their expression never changed. Even when I tried to get funny with him he looked at me as though he was sitting beside the grave of his last and only friend. Having been raised in an atmosphere of chloroform and carbolic acid, he couldn't get the idea out of his head that he was a walking hospital.

Still, Jimmy liked him.

Having lost his master (who probably was glad to get rid of him) he had tried to eke out an existence in the neighboring town of Danbridge. But like most tramp dogs he got into trouble. There was talk of shooting him. Then is when Mr. Walters stepped in. Kind-hearted himself, he thought that it would be a good thing for Jimmy to own a dog of the less fortu-

nate type. That would develop in the younger one a sense of sympathy and responsibility. And so Melancholy became a permanent fixture in the Walters family.

By way of introducing himself into his new home he chewed up a pair of rubbers that Mr. Walters used on rainy days. Next he destroyed the maid's Sunday hat. But Jimmy, already attached to his goofy-looking pet, put up a spirited defense in the latter's behalf.

"He's the most useless dog that I ever saw," Mrs. Walters one day complained to her husband, as I stood outside the kitchen door lapping up the remnants of Melancholy's dinner. "He doesn't know beans. And every time he turns around he knocks something over."

But Mr. Walters was still satisfied with his experiment.

"We mustn't be impatient with him, my dear," was the husband's sort of conciliatory reply. "Unfortunate dog that he is, I dare say it's hard for him to get accustomed to his changed surroundings. Probably he'll improve in appearance and habits as he grows older."

"If he doesn't," Mrs. Walters' voice betrayed a definite grimness, "I'm going to hire somebody to tie a weight to his tail and sink him in the middle of the lake. For this morning I found a big bone buried in the middle of my pansy bed. And I most certainly do *not* intend to put up with annoyances like that. It's hard enough to raise flowers in this sandy soil without having a crazy-acting dog dig them up. If Jimmy wants a pet, let us get one for him that has brains."

"Poor Melancholy!" Mr. Walters sighed humorously. "Here again, it seems, everybody is against him."

"I think you're foolishly sentimental," Mrs. Walters stood her ground.

"Possibly I am, my dear," came the gentlemanly agreement. "And certainly, if the animal is annoying to you, we won't keep him. But let's not send him away till we return from our motor trip. For the boys, who already have taken a great fancy to him, will be left alone with the maid. And I think we ought to make it just as pleasant for them as possible."

Like Mrs. Walters, I didn't think much of Melancholy. He was too blamed goofy-acting. But I wanted to be fair with him. So later on I told him what I had overheard.

"You're going to lose your happy home," says I, "if you don't straighten up and behave yourself. For you're no pup. You should know that without being told."

"Would it surprise you," says he quietly, as added sorrow streamed into his eyes, "to learn that I have a dual personality?"

"What's that got to do with chawed-up rubbers," says I, "and mutilated Sunday hats?"

"By turns," says he, in his learned way, "I experience both the compelling inclinations of a pup and a grown dog. That's why I chew up rubbers and Sunday hats. When the mood strikes me, I have no control over myself. It is a malady. Nor is there a cure for it. My case," he wound up, with a tragic gesture, "is hopeless."

It was useless, I told myself, as I eyed him uneasily, to argue with a nut like that. So I skinned out and left him to his fate.

And now comes the part about the bathhouse mix-up.

The final good-bys having been said, Mr. and Mrs. Walters drove away in their big car, little dreaming that their private garage was soon to be transformed into a public bathhouse. Nor would Jimmy pay any attention to the uneasy maid when she tried to stop him. Instead, he and Tod hammered and sawed for hours. First they partitioned off two rooms, one on each side of the garage, then they built a rack for the required clothes baskets. They made checks, too, out of tin, on which they stamped numbers with a borrowed set of dies. From their enthusiastic talk I gathered that the men bathers were to undress in one of the rooms, putting their clothes in baskets, and the women bathers were to use the other room, likewise delivering their clothes in baskets at the checking counter. When through bathing, the customers, who were to be charged a quarter apiece for the service, would present their checks and get the proper numbered baskets, after which the men would dress on one side and the women on the other, it hav-

ing been understood that at least one of the two proprietors would stand guard over the checked clothes until claimed by their respective owners.

Dave laughed when he heard about the new bathhouse, to advertise which the young promoters had put up a big sign near the entrance to the community lane.

"I bet a cookie that you get the baskets mixed up."

"Not with our system," Tod spoke confidently.

"Who's gonig to run the business?"

"The both of us, of course."

"And do you really expect to make any money?" came the curious inquiry.

"Nothing else but."

"*I* think it's a splendid idea," encouraged Aunt Judy, who always felt relieved when Tod was engaged in some useful enterprise.

"Yah," Dave further laughed, "and *I* am wondering what Mr. Walters will say when he comes home from his motor trip and finds an unknown fat lady putting on her bloomers in the back part of his garage."

"Tut! Tut!" came the sharp rebuke from the

modest guardian. "That wasn't at all funny."

"But it would be funny," Dave's merry laugh persisted, "if Tod and Jimmy got the baskets mixed up, as I say."

"Mr. Walters has often scolded Jimmy for his laziness. And like Tod I feel that the boys will be praised if their business succeeds."

"If—" Dave concluded meaningly.

Here an automobile filled with young people drove up to the farmhouse door.

"Where's that public bathhouse?" inquired the driver.

And shooting a triumphant glance at his older brother, Tod started down the lane on the run.

"Follow me," he called over his shoulder.

Thus the boys' business earned its first dollar. Having borrowed the required market baskets, the happy young proprietors instructed each numbered bather to put his clothes in the particular basket assigned to him. And, as agreed, these baskets were carefully guarded till the bathers returned.

That evening at the supper table Tod regarded his brother with dancing eyes.

"I bet our bathhouse earned more money to-day than your old rowboats."

"Oh, I don't know," came the easy reply. "I took in a dollar and a quarter. Which isn't so worse."

"*Only* a dollar and a quarter," jerred Tod, as he stabbed a pickle.

"And what did you take in?" Aunt Judy inquired of the beaming bathhouse proprietor.

"Two dollars and seventy-five cents," was the proud reply.

"Huh!" snorted Dave, who hated, I guess, to have his younger brother get the best of him. "You won't have luck like that every day in the week."

"It was a bunch of young folks from the big hotel on the other side of the lake," Tod then informed. "They don't like it over there. It's too stony, they say. And I have a hunch that they'll be back to-morrow."

"I hope so," says Aunt Judy, who always encouraged the children to work hard and save their money.

"Maybe you better run around the neighbor-

hood and borrow some more baskets," joked Dave.

"We intend to," came the prompt reply.

And it was well that Tod and his partner did get busy the following morning and look up more baskets, for two cars came that day. One contained six customers and the other seven.

"Three dollars and twenty-five cents!" cried Tod, as he jingled the money in his side pocket. "Boy, this *is* a gold mine."

"Don't overlook the fact," Jimmy reminded, "that half of the money is mine."

"Shall we split now?" inquired Tod.

"Suit yourself."

"If this keeps up we'll be millionaires."

"*And* how!" Jimmy spoke with emphasis.

"What are you going to do with your money?"

"Save it and show it to pa."

Tod grew thoughtful.

"I'd like to buy a shotgun with mine. For the farmers around here tell me that the lake is covered with wild ducks in the fall."

"Gee!" the word was spoken longingly. "I wish I could spend the winter here."

"When are you going back to the city?"

"As soon as school starts."

"Are you going to take Melancholy along?"

"Sure thing."

Tod laughed.

"I bet he'll cause a sensation when the neighbors see him. . . . What kind of a dog is he?"

"Ma says he's a cross between a pumpkin and a whisk broom."

"What's the matter?—doesn't she like him?"

"Oh, yes!" came the grinning exaggeration. "She's crazy over him."

"How'll you trade?" Tod joked.

"No," Jimmy earnestly shook his head. "I like my dog the best, even if he is a mutt."

When Aunt Judy heard about the proposed shotgun she shook her head.

"You need new clothes a great deal more than you do a gun," she declared, in her firm way. "You've outgrown your last-winter's suit. And you'll probably need a new overcoat, too."

"Maybe," Tod spoke hopefully, "I'll make enough money to buy new clothes and a shotgun, too."

"I hope so," Dave spoke up. "For I'd like to get some wild ducks this fall."

"Oh, dear!" sighed the naturally timid guardian. "I suppose I'll have to let you buy a gun if you earn it yourselves. But I'll always worry when you're using it."

Tod jumped hilariously to his feet.

"Bang! Bang!" he cried, pretending that he had a gun in his hands. "That's the way I'm going to mow them down."

Here a distant church bell sounded. And thus reminded that it was prayer-meeting night, Aunt Judy hurriedly changed her clothes and started for town, a mile away.

Over this same course the children would soon be walking on their way to and from school, it having been agreed that they were to attend school in Danbridge, where the family did its trading and banking.

School days! They would be lonely days for me. For Tod would be gone from morning till night. Nor would there be anybody in the near-by cottages to keep me company.

I wished that I could go to school, too!

"I'm a little puppy," says he

CHAPTER III

THE MAN WITH THE GREEN WIG

DURING the time that the garage was being transformed into a bathhouse I heard a great deal about bunions, cancers and chronic dandruff. For the walking hospital kept me well informed on his changing conditions.

The wonder was to me that he could remem-

ber the names of the many diseases with which he imagined himself afflicted. Then, by way of diversion, he reviewed his eventful operation, dwelling proudly on the fact that the veterinarian had sewed him up with a cobbler's awl. And all the time I was wishing to myself (as I yawned behind his back) that the operator had sewed up his mouth instead of his stomach.

"Do you know," he confided to me one day, as we lay in the shade beside the new bathhouse, "I've always had the feeling that the veterinarian got my heart in upside-down."

"How about your brains?" says I, as I concealed another yawn.

"Oh," says he hastily, "the veterinarian never touched my head."

"Then," says I, with similar promptness, "that's the part you want to work on next."

But he was too dumb to take offense.

An old man had come into sight in the winding community lane. He acted tired; and at times, as he approached the bathhouse with shuffling steps, he stopped and leaned wearily on a cane.

Evidently he was deaf, for he made no move to get out of the narrow lane when a car of bathers came up behind him. Watching, and fully expecting an accident, Tod screamed at the top of his voice. There were corresponding screams from the car's frightened occupants, combined with the sharp screeching of jammed brakes.

"I swan!" murmured the dazed walker, as the car stopped in a cloud of dust at his pottering heels. "I—I never heard you come up behind me."

"You're lucky," says the white-faced driver, as he climbed out of the car, "that we didn't run over you."

"Heh?" the old man cupped his right ear with the palm of his hand.

"I say you're lucky," yelled the driver, "that we didn't bump you off."

Having lost his cane, the old man, who seemingly couldn't hear a word that was said to him, stooped down, having noticed his cane on the ground, when, to everybody's amusement, the whole top of his head dropped off.

Tod's hair, as I well knew, was fastened

tightly to his skull. For whenever his hair was pulled he yelled like a crazed Indian. So it was a big surprise to me when the now embarrassed walker's entire scalp dropped off. I couldn't understand it. I thought it was a miracle, like some of the stuff in Aunt Judy's Bible. But I soon learned the truth of the situation from the tittering comments of the amused spectators.

What I had mistaken for the old man's natural scalp was in reality a wig, which, after long service, had turned from a light brown color to a sickly green.

Tod came up on the run.

"Let me help you," he offered, in his willing way, as he picked up the dusty wig and began brushing it.

Peculiarly, though, the old man resented that. And snatching the disheveled wig from the younger one's hands, he slapped the covering on his bald head and started off as fast as he could hobble.

"Who is he?" the still unnerved driver inquired of Tod.

"Search me," came the puzzled reply.

"Aren't you the kid who runs the bathhouse?" the driver then inquired.

"Sure thing," was the businesslike reply.

"Well, get busy and hand us out some baskets."

"Are you all going in bathing?" inquired Tod, as he glanced at a fat woman in the back seat.

"And why not?" the latter stiffened.

"Maybe he was thinking that he'd have to put sideboards on *your* basket," joked the driver.

"Don't be silly. I can swim just as good as the rest of you. And I get just as much fun out of it, too."

After which, having gotten the required baskets, they all disappeared with lively banter into their respective dressing rooms.

Jimmy had gone to the house to get a lunch.

"Well, how's business?" he inquired, upon his return.

But before Tod could reply a sudden crash came from the back part of the building.

"What was that?"

Tod laughed in his jolly way.

"One of our benches, I guess."

"But what happened to it?" persisted Jimmy.

"Evidently it collapsed."

The men were getting a lot of fun out of the accident.

"What's the matter, Susie?" came the laughing inquiry. "Did you bend the bench out of shape?"

"Oh, dry up."

"Now, was that nice?"

"It was nothing but a flimsy old bench anyway."

Straggling from their rooms they checked their baskets and disappeared in the direction of the inviting lake. Nor did the fat woman seem to mind their added banter. She was used to it, I guess. And very probably, I told myself, they were all related, or at least were very close friends.

Then another car drove into the yard.

"Down!" commanded Tod, as I arose in customary style to smell of the newcomers.

So I obediently backed up.

"Can I rent a bathing suit here?" a boy inquired.

"Sure thing," assured Jimmy, who ran to the house and got his own suit.

"How about my ma and my pa?" the boy followed up.

And to accommodate them Jimmy took two bathing suits from a neighboring clothesline, after which the trio disappeared into the bathhouse to make the required change.

"What are you going to charge them?" inquired Tod, this being the first time that suits had been furnished.

"Fifty cents apiece."

"Gosh! I'd hate to be in your shoes if the Barlows came home and found their suits gone. For you know what Mrs. Barlow did to me."

"Don't worry about it," Jimmy gave himself an unconcerned air. "For they're many miles from here. And what they don't know won't hurt them."

"Just the same," Tod spoke uneasily, as he began to repair the broken bench, "I don't like to earn money that way. It doesn't seem fair."

Here Jimmy caught sight of the deaf old man, who strangely was climbing a ladder to the upper part of the Barlow cottage.

The young bathhouse owner wasn't quite so cocky now.

"Suffering cats!" he squawked. "There's old Mr. Barlow himself. Maybe I *will* get into a predicament, as you say. But I certainly never expected to see *him* this afternoon."

As mentioned in the early part of my story, the neighboring cottage was frequently called "The Lighthouse." And many people, seeing it for the first time, wondered at its odd construction. For the upper part did greatly resemble a lighthouse. Three circular rooms had been provided, one above the other. The walls of the topmost room were built entirely of glass. And here, so I had heard, an old man, who liked to be by himself, often sat far into the night, so completely absorbed in his beloved books that he seemed entirely unconscious of the passing hours.

Having built the lower part of the cottage to meet his own requirements, Harry Barlow,

so it was reported, had later erected the peculiar upper part to suit the odd whim of his wealthy father, who in his boyhood had lived near the sea, and who, it was further reported, had cheerfully paid all of the bills incurred by the odd structure. A great fisherman, the old gentleman had spent many summers at the lake, often staying in his odd yet cozy quarters far into the fall. The light of his living room was visible from shore to shore. And thus the unusual structure had gotten its very appropriate name.

This much I had heard about "The Lighthouse" and its interesting owner. But never until to-day had I seen him. For the tower peculiarly had been closed all summer. This had aroused much wonderment throughout the neighborhood. But when questioned, the less popular son and daughter-in-law had given evasive replies.

Now the old man had returned. And finding the cottage locked, he was trying to get into his separate quarters with a ladder.

Later, having entered the tower through a

window, he hired a boat and rowed to the wooded swamp-fringed island that figured so prominently in the preceding book of this series, after which he hobbled back to the country road and stopped a passing bus, thus returning to his home in Madison.

His known departure from the neighborhood was a great relief to Jimmy, who now planned to return the borrowed bathing suits at the earliest possible moment and never touch them again.

"You're right," he told Tod. "I shouldn't have taken the suits in the first place. But knowing that Mr. and Mrs. Harry Barlow were in Milwaukee, I thought that I was perfectly safe."

Having given an attentive eye to the visitor's somewhat mysterious movements, the boys were horrified, upon their return to the bathhouse, to learn that Melancholy, during their absence, had played havoc with their checking system. Evidently he had suffered another one of his "dual-personality" spasms, or whatever he called it. For everything was in disorder.

Having first upset the checked baskets, he had dragged clothes right and left. Now he lay in a corner contentedly chewing a shoe.

"I'm a little puppy," says he, looking up at me with what was the nearest approach to a smile that I ever had seen on his habitually mournful face. "I'm only two months old."

"Yah," says I, "and you're liable to die in your infancy, too, if you don't skin out of here and hide."

"But why should I hide?" he stared at me with wondering eyes.

"Never mind," says I quietly. "Go ahead and swallow that shoe if you want to. For it's a wreck anyway. And you might just as well die with a full stomach."

I thought, of course, that he'd get the tar knocked out of him. And I really felt sorry for him, unresponsible dumb-bell that he was. But Tod and Jimmy blamed themselves a great deal more than they blamed him. They never should have left the bathhouse in the first place, they agreed. And all he got, I'm glad to report, was a good scolding.

It was Tod's idea to dump the clothes in a pile and let the bathers take their pick. But Jimmy insisted on refilling the baskets.

"We'll probably make a lot of mistakes," he conceded, as he started sorting out the messed-up stuff. "But that will be better than dumping everything in a heap, as you suggest."

Then Dave came along.

"Did you know," he inquired of his busy, younger brother, "that old Mr. Barlow was in the neighborhood this afternoon?"

"Sure thing," came the abstracted reply.

"I saw him when he got off the two-o'clock bus. And later, when he came to the farmhouse to rent a boat, I wondered who he was. For he acted kind of queer. As though something had excited him. Shortly after he got into the boat I picked up his purse, in which I found a card bearing his name. Gosh! I never saw so much money in all my life. Hundreds of dollars, mind you. I called him back, of course. And I was blamed anxious, too, till he told me that the money was all there. For I'd hate to be accused of stealing a wad like that."

"Did you get a reward?" inquired Jimmy.

"He offered me one, but I wouldn't accept it, of course."

Here Tod, who dearly loved to get a joke on his more serious-minded brother, caught Jimmy's eye as the last basket was innocently returned to the rack.

"Say, Dave, are you very busy?"

"Not too busy to help you if you need me," came the generous reply.

"We've got a lot of customers down in the lake. They'll soon be coming up here for their clothes. All you've got to do is to give them the baskets that correspond with their checks."

"But what are *you* going to do?" came the natural inquiry.

"That's a secret," laughed Tod. And away he ran, closely followed by his grinning partner.

Tagging them, I saw them hide in the bushes. After which, having heard high-pitched, excited voices at the bathhouse, I hurried back to see the fun.

"I tell you this is *not* my basket," says the fat woman, holding up a man's sock. "The very

idea!" she added, as she twirled the generous tail of her dripping suit. "This is an insult. I want my own basket."

Dave's face was the picture of bewilderment.

"Why—why," he stammered. "I guess there is some mistake in the numbers."

"I rather think so," says the indignant fat woman, holding up a man's green necktie.

"This isn't my basket," a deep voice grumbled. "It's full of ruffled things."

"And my child never wore *this,"* cried an indignant mother, holding up a pair of pink bloomers.

The confusion continued for possibly ten minutes, to the supreme delight of the hidden tricksters. Then, as the last of the clothed bathers drove away, Tod sauntered into sight.

"How's business?" he inquired genially.

Dave wasn't dumb.

"I'll show you how business is," he angrily took after the trickster.

Tod hotfooted it for home.

"Aunt Judy!" he screeched. "Open the door. Quick!"

"Laws-a-me!" cried the amazed guardian, as the panting nephew tumbled into the kitchen, hotly pursued by his furious brother. "What's the matter now?"

"Dave's having a fit."

"Yah," growled the tricked one, as he glared through the screen door, "and I'll give you fits, when I get my hands on you."

"Tut! Tut!" reproved the even-tempered elder. "That's no way for a boy to talk to his little brother."

"*Little* brother! Huh! I'd like to knock his block off."

Later Tod went outside and took his medicine. But Dave in the meantime had cooled off. So the punches that were passed back and forth were nothing to worry about.

And least of all did Aunt Judy experience any concern over the affair. For she was very well informed on the ways of lively boys.

Gertie sat in cushioned comfort

CHAPTER IV

FIGHTING NEMO

TOD looked kind of blue when he came home from the bathhouse the following evening.

"What's the matter?" inquired Dave, as he went over to the kitchen sink to wash his face and hands for supper.

And how good the cooked food smelt as faith-

ful Aunt Judy removed it from the stove and put it on the table! Mealy white potatoes boiled with new cabbage and home-cured country ham. Hot apple dumplings swimming in yellow Jersey cream. New bread and golden, hand-churned butter. Truly, I told myself, as I waited impatiently for my usual share of the tempting food, the once wealthy woman had made no mistake when she moved her orphaned charges to the country. For here they could live well from the stuff that they raised on their own farm.

They were indeed a happy family. And I was the happiest one of all. Somehow I felt especially grateful just then for my fine home. No dog, I told myself, could have fared better.

It isn't money that makes people happy. It's love. And here we had it in big measure. Nor had any of us, least of all the contented elder herself, the slightest inkling of the grave troubles that were about to descend on us.

All of the stinkers in this world aren't skunks. I guess not! Some of them are men. And it was men of this grasping, unscrupulous type

who already were planning, in secret, to steal everything that we had, the little home included.

"Well," Dave inquired again, as Tod moved moodily about the pleasant kitchen, with its singing tea kettle, spotless floors and ruffled window curtains, "what's eating you?"

"Oh," came the grumpy reply, "you ought to know."

"You didn't do quite so well to-day, huh?" Dave's eyes betrayed a flicker of satisfaction.

"We never took in a dime," was the disheartened report.

"And whose fault is that?" came the pointed query.

"Good night nurse!" Tod's temper boiled over. "To hear you talk anyone would think that we messed up the bathers' clothes on purpose."

"Just the same," Dave sturdily stood his ground, as was his nature, "it wouldn't have happened if you and Jimmy had tended to business."

"Oh, go hire a hall," the words were accompanied by an angry gesture.

"I knew yesterday that those people never would come back again. And what they'll tell others about your business won't help it any."

"Rub it in," came the added angry retort.

"And you're the bird," jeered Dave, "who was going to earn the necessary money for a shotgun! Haw! haw! haw! We'll never get indigestion from eating the feathered game that *you* bring in if we have to wait for you to buy a shotgun with your own money."

That was more than Tod could stand. And as the bather bent over the sink, with his face in a basin of water, he got a boost that almost sent him through the side of the farmhouse.

"Cut it out," he squawked, with his eyes full of soap.

Still peeved over the trick that had been played on him, he tried to let on that he had no interest at all in his younger brother's business affairs. But that wasn't true. As a matter of fact, he and Tod kept mighty close together in everything that they did. Their frequent bickerings, so characteristic of brothers of their ages, meant nothing at all.

That's why the wise guardian seldom interfered with them.

But now supper was ready. So she told them, in her brisk bustling way, to hurry up and take their accustomed places at the table, after which, as they dutifully bowed their heads, good boys that they were, she gently said grace.

The meal was interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Harry Barlow, who, it seems, had just returned from Milwaukee, where her husband conducted some kind of a real-estate business.

"Laws-a-me!" Aunt Judy gave voice to her customary exclamation, as the expensively dressed city woman came into sight in the flower-bordered path that led to the front door. "I wonder what *she* wants."

If size is an indication of price, the Barlow automobile must have cost a young fortune. And, of course, the biggest thing in it, as it now waited at the farmhouse gate, was Gertie, who, as usual, sat in cushioned comfort with her aristocratic nose hoisted in the air.

Nor would she unbend when I barked in a friendly way.

Then along came Melancholy with an added droop to his tail.

"What," says I, giving him a sly dig, "did you dare to venture out in the evening dew? Mercy sakes alive! If you aren't careful you'll get hydrophobia in your toenails or rheumatism of the eyeballs."

"I came over to tell you something," says he, sort of excited-like, as he drew me aside.

And thinking, of course, that it was another case of tangled tonsils, or something, I prepared myself for the nerve-wracking ordeal.

"All right," says I wearily, as I leaned against the stubbed stalk of a lilac bush. "Let's hear it and have it over with."

But for once in his life his own imaginary ailments were of secondary importance to him.

"The Barlows," says he, as he took a guarded peek at the waiting automobile, in which Gertie still sat with her nose in the air, "just had a quarrel with a bill collector. And now they're going to close their cottage for the season."

"But why should they quarrel with a bill collector?" says I, kind of confused-like.

Certainly, I told myself, as I further revolved his statement in my mind, there was no need of rich people quarreling with bill collectors. If anybody did that it would naturally be poor people.

But it was his added story, as he now dished it out to me in the lilac bush, that the Barlows weren't half as rich as they let on. The old man with the green wig was rich. As the saying is, he had money to burn. But the son was head over heels in debt. He owed grocery bills, gasoline bills and bills of all kinds, while Mrs. Barlow, in turn, even owed for the swell clothes that she wore.

And still Gertie, who must have known the facts about her people, had stuck up her nose at me! Gosh! We don't own much. But what little we do have is paid for. Nor do we hound a pottering old man to foot our bills either.

That, Melancholy said in conclusion, as we watched Mrs. Barlow get into the elaborate car and drive away, was why old Mr. Barlow had spent the current summer in Madison. For years he had patiently paid his son's and

daughter-in-law's heavy bills. But now he had called a halt on the extravagant pair. And to save added arguments and unpleasant family bickerings, he had established himself in a permanent home of his own.

But why, the question then popped into my head, as I recalled the old gentleman's recent mysterious movements, had he secretly returned to his former summer home with a purse full of money? Why had he entered his peculiar tower-like quarters through a window? Further, why had he rowed to the small island in the middle of the lake? And, in final, why had he hurried back to Madison?

Had he waited for this particular chance to get into the odd summer cottage when its younger owners were away? It would seem so.

In stopping at the farmhouse to leave her Milwaukee address, so that she and her husband, then busy in the cottage, could be properly notified in case anything happened to the closed property, Mrs. Barlow had promised to pay her milk bill as soon as she returned to the city. Always full of big talk, she never let on that she

was hard up. Oh, no! Her husband, she said, was intending to enlarge his business. Many big deals were in sight. And wanting to help him, she had decided to close the cottage on short notice.

But Melancholy and I knew the truth of the matter. Her real motive in closing the cottage, which she usually occupied till well into September, was to reduce expenses.

The goose that laid the golden eggs, so to speak, had gone on a strike. Still, that wasn't a very bright remark for me to make. For old Mr. Barlow, according to reports, was far from being a goose. To the contrary, he was a fine old gentleman. And those who knew him, and loved him for his real worth, had long resented the extravagant son's continued, and often brutal, demands for money. Seemingly the only interest that the unworthy son had in his rapidly aging parent was a money interest.

Shortly after nine o'clock the big car again took to the highway. I saw it pass the farmhouse, bound for the city. This time, though, Gertie was sound asleep.

Aunt Judy wondered, as the days passed, why the promised check didn't arrive. Then one morning, to her surprise, she found a package of mouse traps in the roadside mail box. But of these, and the accompanying door key, I'll give more detailed mention later on.

Tod and Jimmy, in the meantime, having experienced one quiet day after another, had given up all hopes of ever regaining the business that they had lost through their carelessness. Then, as a cool spell set in, as is often the case with August weather, they abandoned the business altogether, removing the partitions and dividing the accumulated earnings.

Each boy took our four dollars and seventy-five cents. And I dare say that Jimmy received warm praise from his returned parents, particularly his father. Nor would it surprise me a bit to see a brand new bathhouse go up on the hill next spring, at which time, let us hope, Melancholy will have gotten over some of his goofy ideas. Certainly he ought to turn out well in a home like that.

In addition to renting boats, Dave often per-

mitted campers to use the lake shore. Which was a lucky thing for me. For many choice bits of food were dropped near the erected tents. One of these vacationists, a tall angular sandy-haired man, who usually burned everything that he attempted to cook, had tried for days to catch a certain huge black bass that frequented a section of the lake known as the outlet. But Fighting Nemo, as the big bass was called by those who had seen it, had resisted all of the determined fisherman's attractive lures. And having made his brags that he'd take the unusual fish home with him, the man, whose vacation had come to an end, felt rather foolish.

Nor was this the first time that a consistent effort had been made to bring about Nemo's finish. One experienced fisherman after another had tried to hook him. But all had failed. And so the story had gotten about that the wily fish bore a charmed life. He was more than a mere fish, the defeated anglers declared. He was a creature with human intelligence.

Tod and I saw the disgruntled camper when he came in from his final fishing trip.

"Yes," he admitted, when questioned about the coveted fish, "I saw the old boy, as usual. He was there in the same place. But when I threw out my line, he insolently bunted the plug three feet into the air. That's an old trick of his. And why he never strikes is a mystery to me."

Tod had a big opinion of himself.

"What'll you give me," he grinned, "if I go out and hook him for you?"

That brought a scornful laugh.

"You?" the camper jeered. "Say, kid, you're funny."

"Will you give me a dollar?" Tod followed close.

"I could offer you a million dollars and be perfectly safe in doing it. For no man can catch that fish. He's guarded by the gods."

"I know a boy who can catch him," Tod persisted.

"Meaning yourself, I suppose."

"Nothing else but."

The man promptly took a card from his vest pocket.

"Here's my address, sonny. Any time you catch old Nemo wire me, and I'll come and get him, bringing you a ten-dollar bill."

That was a challenge! And having overheard the talk about the proposed new shotgun, I knew exactly what was going on in Tod's excited mind as he ran to the farmhouse to get his casting outfit.

Earlier attempts of his to land the coveted fish had failed. But in his bubbling way, he now was confident of success. And the promised ten dollars having been added to his savings, it wouldn't be long, he gleefully told himself, before he had enough money on hand to purchase the longed-for gun—this, of course, in the event that generous Aunt Judy would let him spend his money that way, instead of for needed clothes.

"I've got him, Tuffy!"

CHAPTER V

A BRILLIANT VICTORY

OUR tumbling entrance into the farmyard drew Dave's attention.

"What's your hurry?" he inquired, in his good-natured way.

And stopping, Tod told his brother about the camper's generous offer.

"He's stuffing you," grunted Dave, whose work during the past few months had firmly fixed in his steady mind the true value of money.

"But here's his card telling where he lives."

"No man with good sense," Dave further declared, "would pay ten dollars for a single black bass, even if it was a big as a wash tub."

"He wants to show it to his friends, I guess."

"And to brag to them that he caught it himself, huh?" Dave's lips curled.

"Maybe," Tod conceded, with a thoughtful gesture.

"Listen, kid," came the earnest counsel, "you can't trust a man like that. Even if you were successful in landing the big fish, which isn't probable, I doubt if he'd come after it, as agreed. And where would you be if he asked you to ship it to him C.O.D., or something like that?"

"Just the same," Tod hung on, in his dogged way, more anxious than ever to swell his savings, "I'm going to catch the big fish if I can. It will be fun. And maybe I'll be a whole lot luckier in selling it than you imagine. Certainly

I won't be anything out. For I can send the suggested telegram collect. And if the man doesn't reply, or tries to get funny with me, I'll sell the fish to someone else. I have the feeling, though, in spite of all that you've said, that he'll come after the bass if I catch it. For he's fish crazy. You know that yourself. And he's well supplied with money."

I like to go fishing with Tod. So I was glad that he didn't let Dave head him off. And to show my hilarious feelings I barked circles around him as he hurried on to the farmhouse, where he found Aunt Judy in the kitchen, who told him, as she moved briskly between the pantry and the kitchen table, where she was packing a covered basket, that she was just on the point of calling him.

Scowling, he glanced instinctively at the water pail, which had an aggravating habit of being empty whenever he was in a hurry to go somewhere.

But the pail, he observed with rising spirits, was full.

"I just got word that poor Mrs. Maloney fell

last night and bruised her hip," Aunt Judy then informed, with continued brisk movements. "So I want you to carry this basket of food over to her house and inquire if there's anything else that I can do to help her."

Tod showed his temper.

"Oh, shucks, Aunt Judy! I want to go fishing. Make Mary Jane carry the basket."

"How can I when she isn't here?"

"Then make Dave do it," the unwilling nephew further sought to escape the errand.

In the end, though, he started off in the direction of the injured widow's shabby home. Nor was it long before he was whistling in his usual happy-go-lucky way. For he really thought a great deal of the odd Irish woman, who, after accompanying her wealthy brother to the city, as related in the preceding book of this series, had decided after all that she'd be much happier in her own little home in the country. Nor did she want her brother, or anyone else, to support her so long as she could support herself. At times, though, it was reported throughout the neighborhood, she had very little to do with.

And that is why Aunt Judy, in her big-hearted way, had prepared the basket of food.

We were both given a warm welcome by the demonstrative old woman as Tod emptied the basket on the kitchen table.

"God bless you, my lad, fur bein' the good b'y that you are. An' 'tis sorry I am fur takin' a stick to you the time you stuffed the old rag rug down my kitchen chimney. B'ys will be b'ys, I s'pose. As the old sayin' is, you can't paint a black crow white." Getting her cane she limped painfully across the room and leaned over the contributed food. "Currant jelly, is it? A loaf of new bread, too, an' a three-layer cake. Now, would you look at the elegant frostin' on that cake! With all my pains, Tod, 'tis a happy woman that I be to have such fine neighbors as you an' your lovely aunty."

Warmed by this praise, Tod cheerfully filled the kitchen wood box and brought in a pail of fresh water.

"Is there anything else that I can do for you, Mrs. Maloney?" he inquired, as I frisked around him in my usual peppy manner.

"Sure," the old woman spoke feelingly, "you've done enough already to make me grateful to you fur the rest of my life."

"I can come over this evening," was the added offer, "if you want me to. And Aunt Judy says that you're to let her know if there's anything else that she can do to help you."

Struck by a sudden idea, the aged woman leaned forward on her cane.

"I don't want to be ridin' a free horse to death," she made use of an old saying. "But greatly indeed would I appreciate it, Tod, if you'd bring me a bite of fresh fish. Sure, my old mouth's bin waterin' these many weeks fur a taste of fresh fish."

"Do you like bullheads?" came the quick inquiry.

Up went the old woman's wrinkled hands.

"Bullheads?" she cried, in a shrill horrified voice. "Sure, I'd as soon eat a snake. Some big fat bluegills would be vastly more to my likin', or a nice black bass."

Hurrying home, Tod got his casting rod and headed for the lake.

"Come on, Tuffy," he called, as he jumped into a boat at the farmhouse pier. Nor did I need a second invitation.

Approaching the outlet, after a steady hard row of several minutes, he slowed up, taking pains now to dip the oars without the slightest sound. For this was the territory into which the big bass came regularly to prey upon the minnows from the out-flowing creek.

And knowing what was expected of me I lay quietly on the back seat.

Having prepared his line, Tod arose to make the first cast, but stopped, sort of paralyzed-like, as the water boiled a few feet ahead of the drifting boat.

It was the big fish!

Splash!

This time old Nemo leaped two feet into the air, after which the ripples gradually died away till the surface of the water was perfectly still.

Tod gave a disappointed cry.

"Blame it! He saw me and beat it."

On the way home we stopped at a weedy spot, where Tod, with Mrs. Maloney's request in

mind, tried hard to hook some big bluegills. But he had no luck at all.

As soon as dinner was over he again rowed to the outlet, where he made a beautiful cast, putting the colorful plug in the very spot that the big fish frequented the most. And no sooner had his plug hit the water than it was bunted into the air by the scornful fighter. Gee! I almost fell into the lake. For stuff like that is blamed exciting.

The boat drifted into shallow water. And thinking that he could cast more advantageously from the shore, Tod got out.

But when I started to follow him he ordered me back.

"No, Tuffy," he told me. "Stay where you are. And see that you keep quiet, too, or else I'll send you home with a can on your tail."

Catching a small green frog he used it for bait. But with no success. Yet the moment that he tossed the unhooked frog into the lake there was another lively splash.

"Well, I'll be cow-kicked!" he cried, his face the picture of mingled amazement and chagrin.

"The old boy wouldn't strike at the frog when it was on a hook. But he took it quickly enough when it was free." There was a moment's reflective thought. "Crickets!" came the added exclamation. "Now I know what he jumped at this morning. It was a frog. And all the time I thought it was a minnow. He knows there's young frogs here. And that's why he hangs around. Now I wonder . . ."

Hiding in the grass, the better to deceive the lurking bass into thinking that it had the small bay to itself, he finally tossed another free frog into the lake. And instantly, as expected, the bay became a churning whirlpool as the big fish darted at its helpless prey.

Tod then and there put his wits to work.

Capturing a third frog, he hooked it on the end of his line. But instead of casting, as before, he put the hooked frog on the bank, after which, letting out the line as required, he rowed quietly into the lake. Anchoring the boat, he sat in complete silence for fully ten minutes, then jerked quickly with his rod, thus flipping the frog, in a natural manner, into the water.

And again the expected happened!

"I've got him, Tuffy!" came the triumphant cry, as the water boiled more furiously than ever. "I've got him! And does he ever pull! Oh, baby!"

Brought close to the boat, after its first mad plunge for deep water, the fighting bass leaped clear of the surface, shaking its head in much the same manner that I shake mine at times, as it sought to release the torturing hooks. Then the reel sang as the captive again tried to escape into deep water.

Other fishermen began to gather in the churned bay to witness the exciting battle.

"What's the boy got?" one of the newcomers inquired.

"Looks to me like a whale," came the laughing reply.

Then, as old Nemo made another furious leap into the air, there was a combined admiring cry.

"Why! . . . It's the big bass. It's old Nemo himself."

Checking the fish's mad plunge, Tod skilfully reeled in his line, again bringing the bass

within reaching distance. Then away it went, like a shot from a gun, in a continued attempt to fight its way to freedom.

The battle lasted for more than thirty minutes. Then, with the assistance of one of the accommodating spectators, Tod got a dip-net under the exhausted fish and dragged it into the boat.

"What did you catch it with?" one of the men inquired, as he drew alongside, his tanned face expressing the envy that he felt.

"A frog," returned Tod, so exhausted himself that he could hardly speak.

"By George! That's the biggest bass that *I* ever saw in these parts."

"I'd mount it if it was mine," another fisherman spoke up.

After a short rest Tod set out for home. Nor could he have been happier if he had unexpectedly inherited a million dollars. Triumphant admirals before him had disembarked from their ships with pomp and ceremony. But their natural pride was a mere bag of dried onions as compared with his. And long before

he reached the top of the hill, Aunt Judy heard him coming.

"Laws-a-me!" she cried, meeting him at the kitchen door. "Where in the world did you get that big carp?"

"Carp your granny," snorted the hilarious victor, as he dropped his huge catch in the middle of the kitchen floor. "If anybody happens to ask you, Aunt Judy, that's a black bass."

"But where did you get it?" the amazed guardian persisted.

"I caught it."

"Goodness gracious! You're lucky that it didn't drag you into the lake."

"It's old Nemo, Aunt Judy."

"And you're sure it's a real bass?"

"Nothing else but," was Tod's cocky reply.

Then, to his surprise, his emotional aunt took him into her arms and kissed him.

"I'm *so* glad, Tod, that you caught this nice fish for Mrs. Maloney. She told me this afternoon that you had promised to get her a black bass. But this one will exceed her expectations, I know. Which, of course, is all the better.

For what she doesn't eat to-day she can eat to-morrow. Suppose you dress it right away. Then I'll fry it and you can take it over to her all ready to put on the table."

Tod promptly backed away from the encircling arms.

"Don't kid yourself," he took a defensive stand. "This fish isn't for Mrs. Maloney."

"But you told her——"

"Sure thing," the younger one swung in, sort of decisive-like. "I told her that I'd catch her a bass. And I will later on. But she can't have this bass."

"And why not?" Aunt Judy persisted.

Finding himself in a corner, Tod got huffy.

"Good night nurse! I *would* be a simpleton to cut up a fish that's worth ten dollars, just to feed *her*."

Later he and I walked to town, where he stopped at the telegraph office. But peculiarly he changed his mind about sending a telegram.

And I wondered at that.

I might add, too, that I had other things to wonder about before the night was over.

Tod shut me in a box

CHAPTER VI

TOD'S MYSTERIOUS JOURNEY

WAS Tod going to give away the big bass after all? I wondered as I tagged him home, where Dave stopped us in the farmyard to get first-hand information on the unexpected catch.

If the big bass was sold, as planned, we could buy a gun. And with a gun in the family we

could go hunting. Which was the part that particularly appealed to me, natural hunter that I was. And hoping that Dave would talk sense into the younger one, in the event that he *was* planning to give the unusual fish away, as I partly surmised, I hung around with sharpened ears.

But Tod peculiarly confined his story to the capture itself. Which added to my wonderment. I was kind of disappointed in him, too. For I felt that he should have told Dave everything.

It was the latter's idea that the suggested telegram had been sent. And there the matter stood when the two brothers went into the farmhouse to eat their supper.

Usually the last member of the family to go to bed, Tod to-night voluntarily mounted the stairs at eight-thirty, he and Dave having earlier packed the prize fish in cracked ice.

"He's a great kid, Aunt Judy," praised the warm-hearted older brother, with a glowing face. "As straight as a string and as square as a die. He knows how to use his head, too, as he

proved this afternoon. Gosh! It's hard for me to believe that he actually succeeded where so many other fishermen failed. But we know that he did. And I'm hoping now, with all my heart, that he gets the expected ten dollars. After which, I suppose," the still glowing speaker flashed a whimsical smile at the attentive listener, "he'll want to buy a shotgun. But don't let that worry you, Aunt Judy. For it's a natural boyish interest. And between us we'll learn how to use the gun safely. Besides, think of the nice duck dinners that we'll have when fall comes. Um-yum-yum! Nor is it improbable that we'll be able to bag a wild goose now and then."

Wise guardian that she was, Aunt Judy, notwithstanding her own fear of firearms, decided then and there to say nothing more against the proposed shotgun. For as Dave had so sensibly pointed out to her, all boys liked guns. And country boys in particular, she rightly reasoned, should become accustomed to such things.

"Tod and I had quite an argument about the big bass when he first brought it home," she then

confessed. "Not knowing that he had been offered ten dollars for it, I urged him to give it to Mrs. Maloney. Which angered him."

"Gosh!" Dave's eyes swelled. "It wasn't right to ask him to cut up a ten-dollar fish."

"So I quickly decided. For least of all, I reasoned, would Mrs. Maloney care to eat a fish of that value. But I think he might have been a trifle more considerate in his remarks. For we all know how poor the old lady is. And of what value is a gift if it doesn't entail some definite sacrifice?"

Which brings me to the mysterious part.

Having had the stair door closed in my face, I made myself comfortable in the kitchen, still wondering what had come over my usually considerate young master. Could it be, I asked myself sort of panicky-like, that he was growing tired of me? Did that explain why he had pushed me back with his foot when I tried to follow him to bed as usual? And was he liable to later give me away?

Which probably sounds kind of foolish to you. But that's the way dogs are at times. The

thing we dread the most is the possibility of being turned out by our beloved masters.

With Tod in my mind I raised myself, sort of surprised-like, when I heard him tiptoeing down the stairs. Gee! Very probably, I told myself, as my worries went kiting, he had come downstairs to make up with me. But when I ran to meet him, my tail wagging at one end and my ears at the other, he again brushed me aside with his bare foot.

Which wasn't so nice!

Stopping in the pantry to get some money out of a box on the topmost shelf, he then unlocked the outside door and went to the barn, into which he disappeared with an armful of clothes.

His arms were empty when he came back to the house, where I again tried to get him to notice me. Scowling, he told me in a sharp undertone to lie down and keep still, after which he locked the door and returned, with added stealthy steps, to his room.

Aroused by Aunt Judy the following morning, after several hours of fitful slumber, I later hung around the back door, fearful of the con-

sequences if I once let Tod get out of my sight.

"Oh, look!" cried Mary Jane, during the breakfast preparations. "Tod's washing his neck and ears. He must think it's Sunday."

Turning quickly, Aunt Judy stared at the soapy one, hardly able to believe her own eyesight. For usually she had to threaten him with a stick to get him to wash his hands, to say nothing of his face.

And all the time I was wondering what his hidden schemes were. It was the uncertainty that worried me.

A passing shower having reminded Aunt Judy of a leak near the kitchen chimney, Dave got a ladder and mounted to the roof, where he carefully repaired it with hot tar.

Tod in the meantime had slipped into the barn, where he quickly changed his clothes. Then, dressed in his Sunday suit, he stooped and put his arms around me.

"Good-by, Tuffy," says he feelingly. "Be a good dog till I get back."

After which, to keep me from following him, he shut me in a box.

Dave heard me barking. But he was too busy to help me. Nor did he comprehend, when he finally released me, why I ran so crazy-like in all directions.

"What's the matter, Tuffy?" he inquired, with a puzzled face. Then, as I sat down and howled, he laughed at me.

Here Mary Jane came up on the run, having rented one of the farmhouse boats to two fishermen, whose wives, after a brief stop at the house, had gone on in their automobile to look up a near-by relative.

Given the rental money, Dave took it into the farmhouse to put it with his other earnings, but found, when he opened his cash box, that someone else had been there ahead of him.

"Say, Aunt Judy," he inquired, sort of puzzled-like, as he approached the elder with the opened box in his hands, "did you borrow some of my boat money?"

"You ought to know, David," was the woman's conscientious reply, "that I never would take anything out of your money box without telling you."

It did not occur to them just then that Tod had taken the money. And concluding that he had made an error in his figures, Dave disappointedly returned the box to its accustomed place on the upper pantry shelf.

Noon came and Tod had not returned. It was discovered, too, that the big fish was missing.

Then is when I lit out for Mrs. Maloney's house. But strangely the place was closed. I knew, though, that Tod had been there. For I could smell his Sunday shoes.

Hurrying home I caught sight of Mary Jane in the barn door.

"Aunt Judy!" she screeched. "Tod's running around naked."

"Laws-a-me!" the anxious elder quickly appeared on the farmhouse porch. "What do you mean?"

"He must be naked," Mary Jane qualified. "For here's his shirt and pants. I found them under the cow manger."

It was soon learned, though, that the missing one, contrary to the little sister's excited belief, was dressed in his Sunday clothes.

"I should 'a' told you sooner"

CHAPTER VII

SURPRISES

AUNT JUDY saw now why Tod had applied the soap so fearlessly. And she further suspected that he had gone to Madison on the bus to sell his black bass. But it nettled her to think he would plan a trip like that without taking her. And she was noticeably worried, too.

Then, late in the afternoon, old Pete Gordon shuffled into the farmyard.

A neighbor, he had helped the boys build their boats. And at one time I used to run around with his house dog. I still think he's all right, even if he does have a kind of goofy smell. But I wouldn't wipe my dirty feet on her. And if you want to know why, turn to the preceding book of this series. Gosh! She sure pulled the wool over my eyes, all right.

"I jest come over to tell you, Miz Mason," informed the shuffling newcomer, when the owner had appeared in the farmhouse doorway in answer to his pottering knock, "that Tod hain't a-goin' to be here fur dinner. He told me to tell you."

Aunt Judy was staring now.

"Dinner?" she repeated wonderingly. "Why, it's almost time for supper."

The tardy messenger hung his shaggy head like a confused boy.

"I should 'a' told you sooner," he confessed. "But like the old gilly that I be I up an' furgot it till about ten minutes ago."

Eager to learn all that she could regarding the missing one's whereabouts, Aunt Judy came quickly through the doorway.

"Did you see Tod when he boarded the bus?" she inquired.

"Bus?" repeated the thick-headed farmer, staring in turn. "What bus?"

"Why, the Madison bus, of course."

"Um. . . . When I seed him he was over to Miz Maloney's house, whar some relatives of hers had jest arrived in an autymobile. I helped him git her into the back seat, with cushions all around her, an' then is when I promised him that I'd come over an' tell you that he was goin' to the city. Fur he didn't want you to worry about him."

Dave, in the meantime, had discovered that Mrs. Maloney, too, had peculiarly vanished from the neighborhood.

"Say, Aunt Judy," he cried, as he tumbled into the farmyard, "I just found out from the two men who rented our boat where Mrs. Maloney is. She's out riding with the two women, one of whom is her cousin."

"They've gone to Madison," the guardian supplied in turn, old Pete in the meantime having shuffled away in the direction of his own home on an adjoining farm. "Mr. Gordon just told me about it. And Tod is with them."

"It's his big bass," Dave nodded thoughtfully. "He took it to Madison to sell it. But why he should skin out without telling us is a mystery to me."

"Evidently," Aunt Judy put her own wits to work, "he went over to Mrs. Maloney's house to show her the big bass, intending to board the nine-o'clock bus. But instead he rode to Madison with the two women, who, learning of their relative's recent accident, very probably took her to the city to consult a doctor."

One of the fishermen here appeared in the background.

"What's that?" he injected the sharp inquiry. "Did I understand you to say that my wife and her friend have gone to Madison?"

"So I understand," Aunt Judy accompanied the words with a brief nod.

"Huh!" came the expressive grunt. "They

never told us that they were going to Madison. And the joke will be on them if they run out of gasoline."

"Did you know," Dave then inquired, as the other fisherman came into sight, "that your wives left a basket of food on our front porch?"

"Food!" cried the newcomer, with rising spirits. "Oh, baby! Lead us to it."

An hour later the watched-for automobile drove into the farmyard. Tod and Mrs. Maloney, who, as Aunt Judy had surmised, had been taken to Madison for treatment, were riding in the cushioned back seat. Nor could the younger one have presented a happier face if he had been gone for a month.

Gee! I was a new dog in an instant.

"Hi, Tuffy," he cried, as I further exercised my barking apparatus, having thus accompanied the car down the lane. Then, as he caught sight of Aunt Judy, he climbed with a whoop over the door and threw himself into her arms.

"You're a peach," Dave went at him, sort of scowling-like. "Why didn't you tell us that you were going to Madison? For you might have

known that Aunt Judy would worry about you."

"Please don't scold him," put in the beaming Irish woman, as she leaned out of the car. "Fur not till he had talked with me this mornin', in advance of my cousin's unexpected arrival, did he know fur sure that he was goin' to Madison. 'Here's a big bass that I caught yesterday afternoon,' says he. 'It's yours if you want it. But I think you ought to know that I can sell it fur at least ten dollars.' 'Then,' says I, amazed by the fish's size, 'sell it an' use the money. Fur, like me, you need it.' 'I thought you'd say that,' says he, as he further told me about the camper's offer. 'So' says he, 'I got all ready to go to Madison. But,' says he, as he wrapped up the big fish, 'I may not sell it to the camper.' 'An' why not?' says I, surprised. 'I may git a bigger offer from someone else,' says he. 'An' who,' says I, with added surprise, 'would pay more than ten dollars fur a fish like that?' 'Old Mr. Barlow,' says he. Nor was the lad misinformed. Great indeed will be your surprise, Miss Mason, when you see the big roll of one-dollar bills that he has. Eighteen of

them, mind you, though, as I understand it, all he asked fur the big fish was fifteen dollars. But some men, it seems, have more money than brains. An' so elated was the aged fisherman to git the big bass fur his mounted collection, that he voluntarily tacked three dollars onto the selling price fur good measure."

In counting his money Tod later handed his still-dazed brother three one-dollar bills.

"I took these out of your cash box," says he, "thinking I'd need them to pay my bus fare to the city. But I had the good luck to get a free ride."

"Who told you," queried Dave, with a continued puzzled face, "that old Mr. Barlow was interested in the big bass?"

"A friend of his who works in the local telegraph office."

"But do you think it's square," persisted Dave, in his steady honorable way, "to send one man a telegram at his own expense and then sell the desired bass to another?"

"If you must know the truth of the matter," Tod confessed, "I never sent the camper a tele-

gram. I intended to. But when I heard of old Mr. Barlow's interest in the fish I decided to approach him first. He couldn't any more than turn me down. And as both prospects lived in the same city it would be easy, I figured, in planning the necessary trip, to go from one to the other. As it turned out, though, I didn't have to bother with the camper at all. Nor will he ever know that I caught the big fish unless someone else puts him wise."

"Just the same," persisted Dave, with a sharp jerk of his head, "you might have told Aunt Judy that you were going to the city. There was no need of being so secretive about it."

"I did leave word with old Pete."

"Yah, so we found out—when the day was almost over."

An impish grin then spread over Tod's face.

"Well, old Gloomy Gus, you can't deny that I surprised you. And that's something."

Nor did Aunt Judy scold him. For she wanted him to be self-reliant. That is one of the things that she had taught him. And truly, she told herself, as she gave him a final warm

kiss and sent him to bed, he had proved to-day that he could take care of himself under any and all circumstances.

Dear old Aunt Judy! I sometimes wish that she'd kiss me. But all I'll ever get, I suppose, is an occasional warm pat on the head.

Still, that's something.

"It's a pig!" screamed one of the women

CHAPTER VIII

SCHOOL DAYS

I OFTEN sleep in the farmhouse, as I've mentioned before. But I've learned that it doesn't pay to do any fancy posing stuff on Aunt Judy's cushioned parlor chairs. For she can spot a dog's hair ten feet away. Nor has Tod ever taken me to bed with him without her finding

it out. After which, to punish us both, she usually banished me to the barn for a week or two, where I pleasantly hobnobbed with Betsy, the family cud-chewer, and an occasional prowling tomcat.

But so tickled was I to-night over my beloved young master's safe return that no place suited me except at his feet. Nor did he object when I jumped into bed with him, though he well knew what the consequences would be. And there I slept like a king, while he in turn undoubtedly dreamt as peacefully of shotguns, fighting fish and green wigs.

He and Dave often talk things over in bed. But I thought that the older brother was kind of unreasonable when he awakened us the following morning at daybreak. I could see no sense in it. Nor could Tod either.

"What's the big idea?" he grumbled, as he blinked at the disturber.

"I've just been wondering," Dave spoke in his usual earnest way, "if it wouldn't be better for us to buy a second-hand shotgun. For the kind we want, if we buy it new, is going to cost

us a lot of money. And it's true, as Aunt Judy says, that we both need new clothes."

Wide awake now, and interested, Tod gave the suggestion careful consideration.

"I'd hate to buy somebody's old shotgun," says he, "and learn afterwards that we had a lemon on our hands."

"But if we *can* buy a good, used shotgun for fifteen or twenty dollars," persisted Dave, who evidently had given the matter much earnest thought, "would you be satisfied?"

And as willing as ever to fall in with his sensible brother's ideas, Tod vigorously nodded his head.

"If it's all right with you," says he, in his sturdy likeable way, "it's all right with me."

In the days when money was plentiful the boys had everything. But now they had to share their few belongings. Which was a good thing for Tod, who, if I must admit it, was kind of selfish when I first knew him. He was headstrong, too. And looking back, I found myself wondering if the loss of Aunt Judy's wealth wasn't a good thing after all. Certainly the boys

themselves had benefited by the change in the family's fortunes. Pampered then, they now were self-reliant and industrious.

Putting their money together they learned that they had a grand total of forty-six dollars and fifty-two cents, of which tidy amount they later spent all but twenty dollars for needed school clothes.

Thereafter there was much cutting and fitting in the sunny farmhouse as the thrifty guardian worked up the purchased shirt material into garments of the proper sizes. Then, the boys having been properly cared for, several suitable school dresses were made for Mary Jane, who planned to enter the fifth grade.

When told by the boys that they were going to wear overalls and sweaters to school, thus saving their suits for Sunday and holiday use, Aunt Judy at first remonstrated, arguing that Dave in particular, now a high-school junior, ought to look his best. Otherwise, she contended, he might be ridiculed by his more fortunate classmates and thus denied the popularity due him. But having found out what the other

country boys were going to wear, Dave and his equally determined brother dressed accordingly. Nor did the sensible guardian say anything more on the subject. For she had a great deal of confidence in Dave's good judgment. And she had learned, too, that very few of the Danbridge students, even in the higher classes, wore suits.

As I had expected, the farm became a mighty lonely place when school started. Nor did Tod realize how much I missed him as I watched him disappear morning after morning in the direction of town, where he and Dave quickly made a host of new friends.

Already the most of the near-by cottages were closed for the winter. Called away to his own school in the city, Jimmy Walters had earlier stopped at the farmhouse to bid Tod a reluctant good-by, while Melancholy, at the same time (and still ailing!), had said good-by to me in the farmyard.

"The others talk of coming back in the spring," he spoke in his usual droopy sad-eyed way. "But, alas, for me there is no such hope."

"You do look kind of peaked," I agreed, figuring that I might just as well send him away happy.

"It's my adenoids," he tragically rolled his eyes.

He wasn't much of a companion. Yet I missed him. And I further missed the neighbors, at whose back doors I had picked up so many choice tidbits.

Aunt Judy now had to take her eggs to town where she sold them to a one-legged storekeeper. Also she made and sold butter, having bought a small churn for that purpose. And wanting to use the accumulated skimmed milk, she further bought a pig.

Ordinarily dogs don't pay much attention to pigs. But Suds, as he was called, was a corker. It was almost impossible to keep him in a pen. And how he'd squeal when the boys took after him! That was his way of laughing. And often I laughed, too, as I watched him dodge in and out among the familiar barnyard objects. Letting the boys get within a few feet of him, he'd then turn sharply. And over the winded

pursuers would go in a heap, just as he had planned. After which, of course, he squealed louder than ever.

But funniest of all was the day that he hid under the parlor sofa, though how he got into the farmhouse is still a mystery to everybody concerned, chiefly the embarrassed housekeeper herself.

"I know something," says he, when I met him in the farmyard that morning.

"What?" says I curiously.

"We're going to have company this afternoon," says he.

"Who?" I further inquired.

"The Presbyterian Aid Society."

"And how did you find out about it?" says I.

"Oh," says he, as he twiddled his saucy little tail, "I overheard Aunt Judy talking about it over the telephone."

Later on, as I say, he sneaked into the farmhouse, where he wedged himself under the parlor sofa. Nor did any of the assembled church workers suspect that there was a pig in the room till a late arrival, who weighed close to three

hundred pounds, decided to make herself comfortable on the broad sofa.

"Oh, dear!" she wheezed, as she fanned her red face with a handkerchief. "I'm completely winded."

And down she flopped.

Which, I hasten to add, was just too bad for little Suds, who, as his sides collapsed, separated himself from a squeal that actually jarred the roof.

In the confusion that followed, the fat woman fainted dead away. For on top of squealing, Suds had nipped her on the ankle. I saw her fall to the floor, after which, as the other excited women bent over her with frightened faces, the released porker streaked it with horror-stricken eyes for the front door.

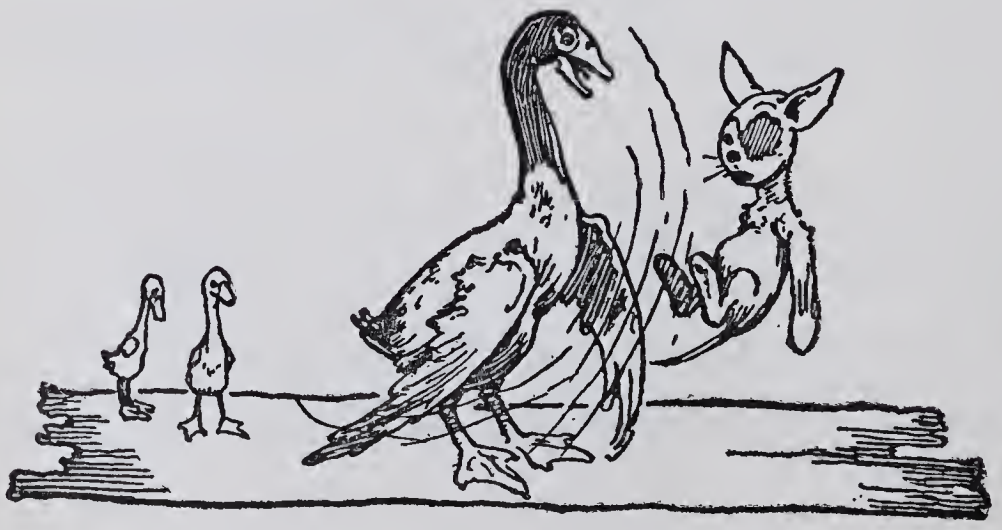
"It's a pig!" screamed one of the white-faced women.

And having seen the flying porker herself, Aunt Judy, who had joined the society shortly after her arrival in the neighborhood, then experienced the most embarrassing moment of her lifetime.

A pig in the parlor! She'd forever be the laughingstock of the neighborhood, she tearfully told the children that night, who, as could be expected, did considerable laughing themselves.

As for Suds, so stiff was he during the next few days that he made no attempt to further escape from his pen. But in time, hardened little runt that he was, he completely recovered, after which he and I enjoyed many lively romps up and down the deserted lake shore.

And now comes the part about the mouse traps and the later mysterious lights.



Suds "caught" the mouse trap with his tail

CHAPTER IX

THE HIDDEN WIG

I WAS reminded of Gertie and her big-acting mistress one morning in September when Aunt Judy mentioned the unpaid milk bill.

"I sometimes wonder," spoke the disappointed farm woman, "if the Barlows are as rich as they let on. For they owe other bills

in the neighborhood. I heard about it through Mrs. Cartright. And surely this indebtedness can't have completely slipped their minds."

"Maybe," laughed Dave, from his accustomed place at the breakfast table, "Mrs. Barlow is planning to send us a check for a Christmas present."

That brought a whoop from Tod.

"Hot dog! I hope she sends me a bicycle and some jelly beans."

"I'd rather have a nice fur coat," put in Mary Jane, in whose mind nothing was more important than good clothes.

"If we ever get the money," promised the faithful guardian, "I'll buy the necessary material and make you a coat. For you'll need it when winter comes."

"How about skinning Suds?" Dave then suggested. "He'd look swell with a silk lining."

"Sure thing," laughed Tod. "You can have his hide, Mary Jane, and I'll eat his hams."

Up went the younger one's nose.

"As though I *would* wear a pigskin coat!"

"Well," considered Tod, with dancing eyes,

"I suppose we could skin a few tomcats for you if necessary."

"Or skunks," annexed Dave.

And thus reminded of my own early encounter with a skunk, as recorded in my first book, I found myself wondering if my brother Cobby, happy-go-lucky little squirt that he was, still hunted in the big forest where the smelly encounter had taken place.

Or had he gone to Africa to hunt for the bigger game that he had talked about so often? Gee! He sure was a swell little pal, all right. The thought of him made me homesick.

This depression, however, didn't last long. For Tod was my master now. I loved him dearly. And least of all did I ever want to become separated from him. It would be nice, of course, to see the old farm again with its sagging fences, leaning windmill tower and bathtub watering trough. And it would be nicer still to see my kind-eyed pa and my loving ma. But, after all, there was no better place than Funny-Bone Farm. The older things in my life couldn't replace the newer things. Nor could

the old home in the extreme southern part of the state ever mean as much to me as my present home. For here I had Tod!

Aunt Judy couldn't get the unpaid milk bill out of her mind.

"I rather liked Mrs. Barlow when I first met her, but I have a very poor opinion of her now. And if she's going to let her milk bills drag along this way I'd just as soon she traded elsewhere."

"How much does she owe us?" Dave then adopted a more earnest manner.

"Six dollars and twenty cents."

"Can't we send her a bill?" Mary Jane suggested eagerly.

"I will," the determined farm woman gave her head an emphatic jerk, "if she doesn't pay up by the first of October. For the money is ours. And we need it."

As usual I followed Tod to the country road that morning, where the rural mail carrier later left a small flat package in the road-side mail box.

"Why!" cried Aunty Judy, as she noted the

postmark and return address. "It's from Mrs. Barlow."

She thought, I guess, that the Milwaukee woman, in paying her bill, had inclosed some kind of a small gift in the package. But what actually came to light, when the wrappings were broken, was a door key and six small mouse traps.

There was no sign of a check!

Puzzled, as well as disappointed, Aunt Judy studied the return address, thus satisfying herself that the mouse traps and door key had indeed been sent to her by the delinquent milk customer. But not until Tod came home that night was the purpose of the traps made clear.

"Hey, Aunt Judy," cried the returned school boy, as he tumbled into the farmhouse in his usual boisterous manner, having stopped on his way down the lane to feed me the crumbs from his lunch box, "did you get any mail to-day?"

"Yes," informed the still puzzled elder, "I received a package of mouse traps from Mrs. Barlow. But I still don't know why she sent them to me."

"I do," came the laughing assertion.

Pressed for an explanation, the hilarious nephew then produced a postal card that had gotten into a neighbor's mail box by mistake.

"In our hurry to close the cottage last month," the city woman had written in the space provided, "my husband forgot to drain the water system. This should be done before cold weather sets in. And finding ourselves detained here by the sudden illness of Mr. Barlow's parent, who was brought here from Madison, I am forwarding a door key to you so that Dave, at our expense, can drain the pipes for us. Also have him burn the basket of rubbish in the kitchen. And if mice have gotten into the cottage through the refrigerator drain pipe as they did last winter, thus leading to the destruction of two mattresses, please plug the floor opening and kill off the mice as quickly as you can with the provided traps."

"Humph!" grunted Aunt Judy, in the stiff manner that she could assume at times. "I dare say we'd be more willing to accommodate her if she'd pay her bills."

Remembering what Melancholy had told me about the grasping son and extravagant daughter-in-law, I wondered, as Suds scooted across the barnyard with a mouse trap flopping on the end of his kinky tail, if the stricken rich man would get the care that he was entitled to in his son's home. Maybe, I told myself, as Tod stood beside the pump laughing at his prank, poor Suds in the meantime having disappeared with an ear-splitting squeal in the direction of the lake, the old gentleman had been taken out of his own home and moved to Milwaukee for a more sinister purpose than the postal card indicated.

Which wasn't such a crazy guess after all, as later events proved. Not that the old gentleman, who soon passed away in his son's home, was actually murdered, or anything like that. But he hadn't been dead long before the search began for his lost fortune. And if the grasping son had gotten his sticky fingers on the missing money he would have kept it, too, notwithstanding the fact that it belonged to someone else.

Here Suds again whizzed into sight, still

squealing at the top of his voice. And great indeed was Aunt Judy's indignation when she learned the cause of the ear-splitting commotion. Only bad boys, she sharply lectured the grinning trickster, mistreated dumb animals. After which, having turned the recovered trap over to Dave, together with the other five, she started him off in the direction of the closed cottage.

"Be sure," she instructed, "that you drain every bit of water from the pipes. Otherwise they'll freeze and burst. And don't forget the basket of rubbish."

"What shall I do with it?" the willing nephew sought more detailed instructions.

"Take it out in the back yard and burn it. But be very careful that your fire doesn't spread. For the ground is covered with dead leaves."

Had Tod been commissioned to drain the water pipes I dare say that he would have explored the Lighthouse from top to bottom. For he was naturally snoopy. And it *was* an odd building. But all Dave did was to open an inside door and glance up the winding stairs.

I don't know much about ghosts. But it seemed to me, as I stood in the open doorway, that the air from the upper rooms had a queer smell. A sort of spooky smell. And I further had the feeling that something I couldn't see was covertly watching us from the upper landing.

My uneasy actions excited Dave's curiosity.

"What's the matter, Tuffy?" he inquired with a good-natured laugh, as he reached down and patted me on the head. "Is there something up there?"

I couldn't very well tell him that there was a spook in the cottage. For dogs can't talk to people. And seeing nothing unusual himself in the tomb-like smell that continued to roll down on us from the upper rooms, he presently closed the door and went back to his work.

"What the dickens! . . ." says he, as he bent over the basket of rubbish in the kitchen. Then he laughed. "Look, Tuffy! Here's old Mr. Barlow's green wig."

Hurrying over to the wig I took a sniff at it and quickly backed off. For it, too, had a queer

unpleasant smell. Dave, though, didn't notice it. And having completed his work in the cottage he thrust the smelly wig into his pocket and started for home.

Aunt Judy met him in the kitchen door.

"Well," she inquired, in her brisk way, "how did you come out?"

"Everything's taken care of," he assured, as he passed into the house.

"We mustn't forget to go down there in a day or two and empty the traps. For nothing is more unpleasant in a closed house than dead mice."

And still the returned worker said nothing about the wig in his pocket. Which sort of puzzled me. He should have burned it. But instead, as described, he had brought it home. And now it would seem that he was planning to make some secret use of it.

"How soon will supper be ready, Aunt Judy?" he inquired, in his thoughtful way, as he paused at the foot of the stairs.

"In a very few minutes if you're in a hurry," came the obliging reply.

"Oh, you needn't rush things on my account. In fact I'd rather you didn't. For I want to do some writing."

"What in?" spoke up Tod, as he stopped at the water pail to get a drink. "Your diary?"

"That's my business," retorted Dave, as he started up the stairs.

Tod was laughing now.

"Don't forget to polish up your paragraphs," he advised, "and dot your i's."

"I'll put a polish on the end of your nose," was Dave's added retort, "if I catch you snooping around in my room and reading stuff that doesn't concern you."

"Yes," put in the impatient housekeeper, as she paused beside a dirty footprint on the kitchen floor, "and I'll polish the both of you with a switch if you don't make better use of the door mat."

Waiting at the foot of the stairs, I noticed, when Dave came down to supper, that his pocket was empty. And curious to learn where he had hidden the wig I later put on a clever little sleuthing act in his room.

Then along came Tod, who, like the big snoop that he was, got out the forbidden diary and read it, thus learning that the writer had a youthful sweetheart.

Familiar with his younger brother's snoopy ways, Dave should have known better than to write a lot of mushy stuff in his diary. But he thought he had a safe place for it. And was he ever furious when he came home from school the following afternoon! Br-r-r-r!

"Laws-a-me!" cried the startled guardian, as he burst into the kitchen. "What's the matter with you boys now?"

"I'm going to clean up on Tod, Aunt Judy," came the furious threat, "if he doesn't quit snooping in my things. He got into my diary last night. And to-day at school he told the fellows about a note that I wrote to a girl. I was foolish enough to copy the note in my diary. That's how he found out about it. And all I've heard to-day is 'Hilda this' and 'Hilda that.'"

Aunt Judy hid a smile.

"And who might Hilda be?" she injected the sly inquiry.

But Dave was in no mood to discuss the matter from that angle.

"I know I'm bigger than he is, Aunt Judy. But I won't let that stop me if he ever dares to touch my diary again."

"And you're sure," came the added quiet inquiry, "that he got his information from your diary?"

"Of course I'm sure."

"But I told him just the other day that he wasn't to touch your diary or anything else of a personal nature that you possessed."

"Yes, you *told* him," came the further outburst. "You tell him a lot of things. And in the end he does just about as he pleases. But he can't work me the way he works you. I've got some rights in this house. And if he doesn't respect them I'll knock his block off."

"Which probably would serve him right," conceded the wise elder, who showed plainly enough by her manner how anxious she was to bring about peace in the family. "But considering the fact that I'm his guardian, don't you think it would be advisable to let me handle

him? Certainly, I should be better qualified to administer punishment than you."

"The trouble is, Aunt Judy, that you don't punish him enough."

"Listen, David," the woman adopted a tone of voice that I never had heard before. "I love you both, and I know that you both love me. More than that you love each other, as brothers should. Tod's ways are often aggravating. And like you I feel tempted at times to shake the daylights out of him. Yet I'm confident, after living with him all these years and administering to his wants as well as I could, that the kind of punishment that will be most effective with him is continued love—the kind of love that *you* have for him and the kind that *I* have for him. So please let me handle him in my own way."

Dave was sober now.

"I'm sorry I said such mean things about him, Aunt Judy. For I *do* love him. And he's a good kid, too. But that 'Hilda' stuff kind of got my goat."

The Professor's wig disappeared while he slept

CHAPTER X

A YOUTHFUL PRANK

EXPECTING the usual loving welcome upon his return from school, Tod gave a startled squawk when the severe guardian took him by the ear.

"Suffering cats, Aunt Judy!" he danced. "How dc you get that way?"

"I just heard a bad report about you."

"About *me?* Why, Aunt Judy, it can't be possible."

He quickly dropped his innocent air, though, when questioned about the forbidden diary. And now an impish grin spread over his face.

"Crickets, Aunt Judy! You ought to read it yourself. It's perfectly killing, especially the note that begins, 'Hilda, my sweetheart——' "

"Stop!" came the sharp command.

"But it's funny," the younger one persisted. "And was Dave ever sore when I told the kids about it! He almost ran his legs off to-day trying to catch me."

"Don't you realize, Tod, that you shouldn't read your brother's diary, much less repeat its contents to outsiders?"

"Gee, Aunt Judy! Don't look so sober. It's funny, I tell you. You'd laugh, too, if you read it. Dave has an awful case on Hilda Wilber. You should see him moon at her in school. Oof! It almost turns my stomach. And in his diary he copied a note which began, 'Hilda, my sweetheart——' "

"Stop!" came the repeated command. "I don't care to hear it. And I want to tell you once and for all, young man, that you've got to quit prying into your brother's affairs. For we're all entitled to some privacy, even as members of a family. And if a young man takes a fancy to a nice girl, as we know the Wilber girl to be, he doesn't relish being tormented about it and spied upon. So you're to keep out of his room hereafter. Furthermore you aren't to touch his diary. Do you understand?"

Tod's thoughts were now on his empty stomach.

"What's that good smell, Aunt Judy? Is it new bread?"

"I wasn't talking about bread," came the sharp reminder.

"Crickets! It *is* new bread. And does it ever look swell! Um-yum-yum! Can I have a slice while it's hot, Aunt Judy? Please."

And to gain his own ends he threw his strong young arms around the woman's slim waist and hugged her until she begged for mercy.

"Laws-a-me! I don't know what to think of

you, child. One moment I feel like shaking you out of your shoes. And the next moment I'd gladly lay down my life for you."

"I'm pretty good, Aunt Judy. I got ninety-nine in one of my tests to-day."

"Yes, and you did other things to-day that weren't nearly so commendable."

"Can I have a slice of new bread, Aunt Judy?" came coaxingly.

"Oh, I suppose so," the loving relative finally gave in, unable to resist his added embrace. "But please don't squeeze the breath out of me."

Thereafter I heard a great deal about "Hilda, my sweetheart." For Tod dearly loved to tease his older brother. And here was an exceptional opportunity.

Distracted at times by their racket, as they tore through the farmhouse, Aunt Judy threatened to punish them both. And once she did drive them out of the house with a broom. That was the day they fell over Suds, who thought, I guess, as he lit out for the lake with the usual ear-splitting squeals, that he had been messed up by a young cyclone.

Having landed in a heap, the brothers proceeded to fight it out in regular boyish style, one pommeling furiously and the other shrieking at the top of his voice. Nor did Aunt Judy interfere. Satisfied that the smaller one's piteous shrieks were as greatly exaggerated as the older one's anger, she sensibly decided to let them settle the matter in their own way.

But it took more than one good-natured beating to silence Tod, natural torment that he was. And how he laughed when he learned that Dave was to play the part of an "impassioned lover," as the English teacher expressed it, in a school operetta.

About this time Professor Alexander Cartright, one of the oldest instructors in the Danbridge high school, went to sleep in his chair. And when he awakened his wig was gone!

Which led me to wonder if all old men wore wigs! And I found myself wondering, too, as I recalled the other wig that Dave had hidden in his room, if the two wigs were now together.

Boys often engage in odd hobbies. Some save postage stamps. Others save doorknobs. So

a wig collection wasn't entirely out of reason.

Still, I couldn't make myself believe that Dave, usually so kind and so courteous in his treatment of others, would deliberately steal an old man's wig to add to his possible secret collection.

Earlier, it seems, the aged instructor's very noticeable headpiece had been turned inside-out as he dozed between periods, to the great amusement of the incoming class. But now a much bolder attempt had been made to embarrass the old gentleman. Which so angered the younger principal that he threatened, in case the trickster was caught, to turn him out of school.

Not till I overheard Aunt Judy discussing the affair at the supper table did I learn that Professor Cartright's wife was the fat lady who had fainted that day on the sofa.

"I called her up as soon as I heard about the youthful prank. And it's her story that the old gentleman is terribly upset. He's even thinking of resigning, having gotten the notion into his head that the pupils are all opposed to him."

"But that isn't true," Dave spoke quickly.

"To the contrary, we all like him very well."

"Then why did you play such a mean trick on him?"

"Everybody laughed the day his wig was turned inside-out. And I suppose it was stolen to create more fun."

"If that's the case," the sympathetic speaker stiffened, "somebody in your school has a very perverted sense of humor. For there's nothing funny in playing tricks on an old man—particularly an instructor who has given his whole adult lifetime toward the conscientious education of the community's youth."

"Gosh, Aunt Judy!" Tod then put in. "You make it sound like a murder, or something. It was only a joke."

"It will be no joke to the trickster's parents if he's expelled from school."

Here Dave got up and put on his cap.

"I've got to go back to the schoolhouse, Aunt Judy, for another rehearsal to-night."

"How are you getting along?" came the natural inquiry.

"Not so hot."

"What's the matter?" grinned Tod. "Does sweet little Hilda give you a stiff-arm whenever you try to smother her to your manly bosom?"

"Oh, shut up!" flushed the "impassioned lover," as he hurried away in the direction of town.

Later he called up on the telephone.

"Say, Aunt Judy, do you care if I spend the night with Whistler Jenks?"

"Not if you behave yourself."

"He's giving a party late to-night. And I hate like the deuce to walk home after midnight."

"But what will you do for lunch to-morrow?"

"Have Tod bring enough for both of us."

"Oh, yah!" the younger nephew spoke for himself. "What do you think I am?—a two-legged dray?"

Thereafter Dave spent many nights in town, as the intimacy grew between he and the Jenks boy. And one week end they went to Milwaukee together.

"How about me?" inquired Tod, when he learned of the proposed motor trip.

"Talk with Whistler. For it's his car."

"Who else is going?"

"His sister."

"Gosh! I wish that I could go, too."

"We can't be bothered with little children," Dave gave a big gesture.

"Huh! Getting smart, aren't you?" Tod's eyes flashed.

"Well," Dave further gestured, "if it's in me I can't forever conceal it."

Left behind, Tod sulked in his room for an hour or two. Then, wanting to be just as mean as possible, he tiptoed into the front bedroom and got out the forbidden diary.

Seating himself near a window he opened the diary and read it aloud.

"Septemeber 10—Hilda smiled at me to-day when she passed my desk to sharpen her pencil. She had on a red dress. I wish I could always hold her in my arms like I do in the operetta.

"September 11—I got Whistler to break the point of Hilda's pencils to-day. She passed my desk seven times. She wore a blue dress. I like her better in red. It makes her cheeks look like

roses. Another rehearsal to-night! Whoopee!

"September 12—I played a good joke on Professor Cartright to-day. Learning that he was asleep in his chair I tiptoed into the room and snitched his wig.

"September 13—Everybody is wondering who took Professor Cartright's wig. But no one suspects me, least of all Aunt Judy. To-night at the supper table she said things that made me wish I hadn't done it. Of course, it was done in fun. I didn't do it to be mean, as she thinks. It was just a clever prank. The wig is hidden under my mattress. But now that I have it I don't know what to do with it. I wish I hadn't taken it."

And there Tod stopped.

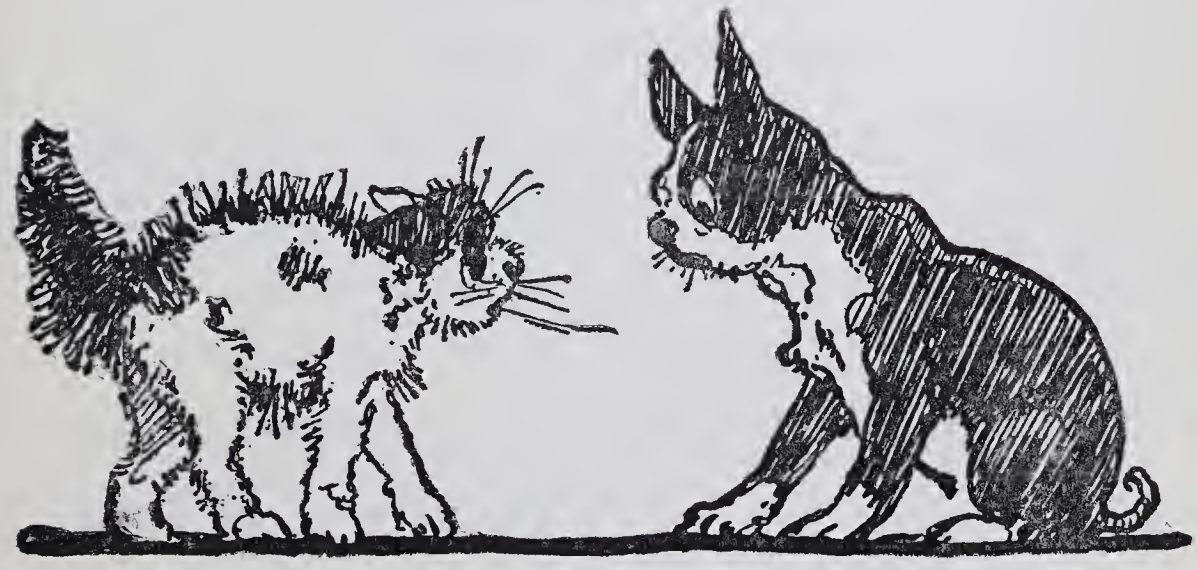
I had suspected Dave, as recorded. But I couldn't make myself believe that he'd do such a thing. So I knew exactly how Tod felt.

There was a peculiar drawn look on his face as he closed the diary and returned it to its accustomed place. Then, as he stopped beside the bed, he bent over and threw his arms around my neck.

"Oh, Tuffy!" he sobbed, as the hot tears trickled from his face to the top of my head. "I never dreamed that Dave would do a thing like that. And if Aunt Judy finds out about it it will break her heart. She expects things like that from me. I'm a big bum, I guess. But he's different. That's why I've always depended on him. Oh, Dave, Dave! I wish you hadn't done it. I wish I had done it myself. Then I could depend on you like I used to."

His eyes having run dry, he then arose and lifted the mattress. And there, just as he had expected, lay the wig. But *was* it Professor Cartright's wig? It looked like the green wig to me.

Gosh! My wits were in a muddle now. I didn't know beans from buffaloes.



Tod wonders what to do with the wig

CHAPTER XI

DAVE'S CONFESSION

HAVING removed the wig from its hiding place, with awkward, trembling hands, Tod stood for several minutes looking down at the incriminating headpiece.

"What shall I do with it, Tuffy?" he inquired, as he gingerly shifted it from hand to hand.

"Shall I take it to town to-night and put it in the old man's mail box? Or shall I simply burn it up and say nothing about it?"

He would have given a great deal, I think, if he hadn't found it, thus shattering his faith in the trusted older brother. But now that he had it he felt that it was his duty to get rid of it.

And somehow, as I stood beside him, as distressed as he was over the diary's unexpected disclosures, I had the feeling that never again would anybody in the family, or elsewhere, have occasion to call him a snoop.

A changed boy, and sorry now that he hadn't curbed his curiosity, he had snooped for the last time.

Here a voice called up the stairs.

"Tod. Where are you?"

And hurriedly thrusting the wig into his pocket he passed into the hall.

"I'm coming, Aunt Judy."

I followed him down the stairs, where his aunt, at sight of him, gave a startled cry.

"Laws-a-me, child! What makes you look so queer? Are you ill?"

"No," he slowly shook his head, "I feel all right." Then, as the puzzled elder continued to stare at him, he inquired: "Say, Aunt Judy, what would you think if Dave tied a tin can on Tuffy's tail?"

"Why discuss such a ridiculous thing? For we both know that Dave wouldn't do it."

Tod winced.

"And what would you think, Aunt Judy, if I did it?"

"Well," came the somewhat reluctant reply, "considering what you did to poor little Suds the other day I certainly wouldn't be surprised."

And wincing again, Tod turned away.

Dave came home the following afternoon with a glowing account of his motor trip. But he stopped short in his description of the happy outing when he caught sight of his aunt's face.

"Why, Aunt Judy!" he cried, with boyish concern. "You've been weeping. What's the matter?"

"I have some bad news for you, David. It was Tod who played that mean trick on Pro-

fessor Cartright. He lost the wig last night on his way to town. That's how I came to learn of his guilt. For he acted so queerly when he returned to the house for a flashlight that I made him tell me the truth. And to think that one of my own boys should be responsible for the shameful prank! It almost breaks my heart. And how I'll ever be able to show my face in Danbridge again, much less continue my friendship with Mrs. Cartright, is more than I can comprehend."

Dave was the picture of bewilderment.

"Why, Aunt Judy!" he cried, as he further stared at the weeping woman. "What are you talking about?"

"I know how you feel, David," the distressed elder resumed, as she dabbed at her eyes with a wadded handkerchief. "It's hard for you to believe that Tod would do a thing like that. But it's true. For he told me himself. Later he went to town and confessed his guilt to the principal. And now, I suppose, he'll be expelled."

Dave seemed more bewildered than ever.

"Who are you talking about, Aunt Judy?"

"Why, Tod, of course," came the somewhat impatient reply.

"But he never stole Professor Cartright's wig. It was Huber Krebbs."

"No, David," the woman wearily shook her head, "it was Tod. He told me so last night when he came home to get a flashlight, having earlier lost the wig on his way to town."

His knees giving out, Dave sank into a chair.

"Either I'm cuckoo," he dully regarded his aunt, "or you are."

And all the time I sat there on needles and pins, as the saying is, wondering how long it would take them to tumble to the fact that it was old Mr. Barlow's wig that the mistaken younger brother had lost, and *not* Professor Cartright's wig.

Good kid that he was, and true-blue all the way through, Tod had sacrificed himself to save his beloved older brother. I knew that at the time of his confession. But I thought I wouldn't put it down in my story till Dave got home.

And now, as I say, there the latter sat like a big numskull, while Aunt Judy in turn continued to water the front of her dress with unnecessary tears.

"I've never had to worry about you, David. Nor Mary Jane. You've both been a great comfort to me. But I *have* worried about Tod a good many times. And now the thing that I have long dreaded has happened."

Dave was on his feet now.

"No, Aunt Judy," he forcefully shook his head. "You're all wrong. Tod never stole that wig. It was Huber Krebbs. I saw him. And I suppose I should have told on him. But boys hate to do that. If Tod's honor is at stake, though, Huber has got to come out with the truth. For I won't keep silent and let my own brother get into trouble when he's innocent."

It was now Aunt Judy's turn to look bewildered.

"But if Tod is innocent, as you say, why did he confess his guilt to the principal? And how did he get possession of the wig?"

This served to further awaken Dave's wits.

"It's gone," he cried, after a hurried trip to his room.

"What's gone?"

"Old Mr. Barlow's wig. Gosh, Aunt Judy!" a flush crept over the speaker's face. "I see the whole thing now. You know the trouble that I had with Tod over my diary. Well, when the wig was stolen at school I thought I'd play a trick on him. So I let on in my diary that I was the guilty party. Having found one of Mr. Barlow's wigs in the basket of rubbish that I burned, I hid the wig under my mattress, hoping that Tod would do the usual thing and snoop around till he found it, after which, if he tattled to you, I intended to give him the hee-haw. But instead of tattling on me, as I expected, he shouldered the blame himself."

There was new color in the elder's face.

"Oh, David!" she cried. "You don't know how happy you've made me."

"Where is Tod now, Aunt Judy?" came the quick inquiry.

"Somewhere between here and town. He lost the wig, as I say, having started out at dusk to

secretly return it to its supposed owner. And he's been searching the road all day."

Heading for town, Dave paid so little attention to me that I finally passed him and joined Tod, who, at sight of the returned older brother, hid in the weeds that bordered the dusty country road.

Then along came Whistler Jenks.

"Hey, Dave, did you hear the news?"

"What news?"

"Huber Krebbs just confessed to the principal that he's the one who actually stole old Cartright's wig. And now everybody's wondering why your kid brother shouldered the blame."

Dave's eyes made me think of twin stars.

"To-morrow morning I'm going to tell the whole general assembly why Tod took the blame. For I want everybody in town to know what a peachy, true-blue little brother I've got. Why, Whistler, he's a—a hero."

And listening, I doubt if the world contained a more bewildered person than the mentioned "hero" himself.

"Gee-miny crickets, Tuffy!" he finally found his voice. "Did you hear that? Dave says I'm a hero."

And then, in his jolly way, he grabbed me around the neck and we rolled over and over in the weeds. He had still to learn the truth about the false entries in the diary. And he couldn't quite figure out whose wig he had lost. Evidently there was a mix-up of some kind. But the only thing that stood out in his mind just then was the fact that Dave was innocent.

That was the most important thing of all.

What he didn't know (nor me either at the time) was that the lost wig, whose feeble owner was then dying in his son's home, contained a most unusual secret, as the following chapters will reveal.

Tod and Tuffy see a ghost in the tower

CHAPTER XII

THE MYSTERIOUS LIGHT

A BARRIER had lately arisen between Tod and Dave, caused, I dare say, by the latter's increasing intimacy with the Jenks boy. But now the barrier had been leveled. The two brothers became inseparable.

Which isn't saying though that Tod, now the

idol of his schoolmates, completely dropped his harum-scarum ways. Far from it. At times the farmhouse rang with his lively banter. And particularly did he love to pester his aunt, who, patient old soul that she was, should have used a switch on him. But having brought credit to the family, instead of disgrace, she seemingly couldn't do enough for him.

Already the expected wild ducks had begun to come down from the north, where, throughout the summer months, they had fattened themselves in secluded rice marshes. And as Dave watched them gather in the adjacent lake he became more anxious than ever to purchase a suitable shotgun. But his inquiries throughout the neighborhood brought no result. He was offered plenty of old guns at attractive prices. But they weren't what he wanted.

Tod in the meantime, having learned whose wig it was that he had lost, often puzzled over its disappearance, wondering if it still lay unnoticed in the weeds or had been picked up by some passerby. It was my opinion though that someone was wearing the wig, otherwise I

would have found it. For you know how dogs are. And, as mentioned, this wig had a particularly strong smell.

Which may have been the reason why its odd-acting owner had discarded it the day he crawled into his tower-like quarters through an upper window. Or it may have gotten so dirty in the lane, where he had dropped it, that he couldn't clean it, and having another in the cottage he had changed before returning to his home in Madison.

Still convinced that the closed cottage harbored some kind of a weird unearthly spook, the characteristics of which I could only imagine, I often hung around there with sharpened eyes and ears. But not until word had been received of old Mr. Barlow's death did I actually see or hear anything of a ghostly nature.

According to the notice that Aunt Judy read in the newspaper that she received daily through the mail, the wealthy man had died at the Milwaukee home of his only son. The funeral was to be held the following Wednesday afternoon. And it was on Thursday night,

right after the funeral, that Tod and I saw the mysterious death light in the lake-shore tower.

We had spent the evening at the home of another country boy, who had just made a radio. The hours passed faster than we realized. And warned, by the striking clock, that it was time to leave, Tod sought to shorten the trip home by following the lake-shore path, which eventually brought us within sight of the closed summer homes.

It was Jimmy Walters' story that the tower-like quarters of the dead man were full of books. And having long desired to see these books, Tod now wondered, as he caught sight of the eerie-looking moonlit structure, who would inherit them. He mentioned it aloud, which explains how I knew what was going on in his head.

Natural book lover that he was, he wished, I guess, that the library had been left to him!

And now comes the shivery part. For what do you know if the dead man didn't float past one of the upper windows with a lighted match in his hand! Yes, sir, that's a fact. I actually saw it. And so did Tod, who, after one long

horrified look at the tenanted tower, lit out for home lickety-cut.

Gotten out of bed by our tumbling entrance into the otherwise silent farmhouse, Aunt Judy looked startled when she learned the cause of our fright. Dave though laughed at us, contending that the moving light that we had seen was merely the reflection of a falling star on one of the cottage windows. But Tod and I knew better. We actually had seen the tower owner's ghost. Forsaking his newly made grave he had peculiarly returned to his summer haunts. And finally to satisfy us, and also his unnerved aunt who feared that the cottage was being robbed, Dave agreed to go back with us and investigate.

Oddly though we saw nothing more of the moving light, thus bearing out the older brother's theory that we had indeed been fooled by the reflected starlight. And laughing at us again over our apparently needless fright he returned to the farmhouse and quickly sought his bed.

There was much jolly talk the following morning about Tod's "death" light. Even

Aunt Judy joined in the bantering conversation, pointing out to the unmoved younger nephew that he was much too big to believe in ghosts. Dead people, she maintained, forever remained where they were placed, whether in tombs or graves. And least of all did they go floating around with eerie lights in their hands, as some imaginative story writers had pictured.

And all the time Tod was patting me on the head as much as to say: "*We* know what we saw, don't we, Tuffy?"

I had a lot of respect for Aunt Judy's opinions. She was a smart, capable woman. But I knew that she was all wrong on the ghost business. For not only had Tod and I seen the moving light, but, as recorded, I had earlier smelt a ghost in the upper part of the tower. Very probably, I told myself, it was the dead man's wife. Being a ghost herself *she* knew that his death was due. And so she had come here to meet him.

Signaling to me as usual, Tod started for school, but stopped, amazed, as a big car drove into the farmyard.

It was the Barlows!

Mindful of the visitors' recent bereavement, Aunt Judy met them gravely at the door, while I in turn hurried over to the car to look at Gertie, who as usual sat on the cushioned back seat with her nose in the air.

"What's the matter?" says I. "Are you suffering with halitosis?"

"Trash!" says she, in her uppish way.

But it took more than that to insult me.

"How's Melancholy?" I then inquired.

"Write to him and find out," she flipped the words back at me.

"Don't you ever see him?" I further inquired.

"I'm not interested in dogs of *his* type," says she, in her lofty way.

After which I tried to pump her, wondering why she had left Milwaukee so soon after old Mr. Barlow's funeral. But instead of giving me the desired information she started talking about Europe.

"I've always wanted to see Shakespeare's birthplace," says she.

"I never heard of him," says I.

"*You* wouldn't," says she, giving me the same kind of a look that the Queen of England might have bestowed on a depraved bedbug.

"What made him shake?" says I genially.

"He was a great playwright," says she. "And how I'll thrill when I tread the same paths that he trod."

"When is this going to happen?" says I curiously.

"As soon as we find the old man's wig."

That made me stagger.

"Huh?" says I, giving her a dumb look.

"My mistress and I," she resumed, "would have gone to Europe long ago if it hadn't been for old Mr. Barlow's miserly ways. But now we can afford anything."

And still stunned by her reference to the dead man's wig, I again tried to quizz her. But with no success. If she had mentioned a wig, she said, with a kind of crafty look on her hateful little face, it was merely a slip of the tongue. And with that she drove off in the direction of the closed cottage, to get the key of which the owners had stopped at the farmhouse.

"They acted queer," says Dave, with a puzzled look on his face, as the big car disappeared from sight in the winding tree-bordered lane.

"I noticed that," nodded Aunt Judy, who, too, followed the disappearing car with puzzled eyes. "So I was as brief with them as possible."

"I know what's the matter with them," Tod spoke wisely. "They came here sort of secret-like, having driven all night to get here. And they were afraid that we'd quizz them."

Unwilling now to leave for school, the excited children gathered expectantly in the front doorway as the visitors again drove into the farmyard.

This time even Gertie came to the house.

"You're going to get yourself into trouble," says she hatefully, "if you don't bring back that green wig."

"What wig?" says I, anxious to draw her out.

"The one that you stole from our cottage."

"Who wants it?" I further inquired.

"My mistress, of course."

"But if she's as rich as you say," I craftily fol-

lowed up, "why doesn't she buy a wig of her own?"

"We really aren't rich yet. But we will be when we find the wig."

"That sounds like a riddle," says I.

"If you must know the truth," says she, figuring, I guess, that it would pay her to be communicative, "we can't settle old Mr. Barlow's estate till we find his wig."

"Why?" says I again.

"Because there's something in the wig that we need."

"Does it walk," says I, scratching myself with my hind foot, "or fly?"

"I'm referring," says she, with one of her lofty gestures, "to a *very* important paper."

"Oh, dear!" says I, heaving a sigh.

"What's the matter?" says she quickly.

"I almost hate to tell you," says I.

"Do you know where the wig is?" says she.

"No," says I, "but I know where it was."

"Where?" came the quick inquiry.

"In the basket of rubbish that Dave burned," says I heartlessly.

That gave her a bad turn.

"But why didn't you save it?" she creaked. "For you might have known that it was valuable."

"Orders are orders," says I. "And we still have the postal card in which your mistress requested us to burn everything that the basket contained."

"Oh, oh, oh!" she suffered. "This is terrible. And I had looked forward *so* much to seeing Shakespeare's birthplace."

"Poor old Shake will never know what he missed," says I sympathetically.

"And you're sure," she pressed, "that the wig was in the basket?"

"Dead sure," says I.

"I was in hopes," says she, "that you had stolen it."

"My ma didn't bring me up that way," says I.

"It is hard to comprehend the workings of Fate," she then orated in her big way.

"Mine hurt," says I, "if I wade in cold water."

"What are you talking about?" says she.

"My feet," says I innocently.

Up went her nose.

"I didn't say *feet.* I said *Fate.*"

Wondering what Mrs. Barlow would have to say about the vanished wig, I then bounded up the porch steps, thus learning that a number of books had been stolen from the reading room in the tower.

Aunt Judy looked offended.

"You should know without me telling you, Mrs. Barlow, that we wouldn't touch your books, or, for that matter, anything else in your cottage, except as instructed. As for entering the upper rooms, it was my impression that the door at the head of the stairs was locked."

"It *was* locked," Tod put in.

So far the swarthy, surly-acting husband had let his wife do all the talking. But he now stepped forward.

"You seem very certain that the stair door was locked," he eyed Tod distrustfully.

"Sure thing," came the unhesitating reply.

"But how do you *know* it was locked?"

"Because I tried to open it last Saturday."

"Are you in the habit of spending your Saturdays in our cottage?" came the icy inquiry.

Tod flushed.

"You seem to overlook the fact," says he, "that we were asked to tend to your mouse traps. That's what I was doing in the cottage last Saturday. Dave set the traps. So I had to search for them. And naturally I tried all of the doors."

Peculiarly nothing was said about the vanished wig. And that puzzled me. Could it be, I wondered, that Gertie was stringing me? Or had the crafty visitors purposely avoided all mention of the missing wig?

In leaving, they again promised to pay their milk bill as soon as they returned to the city. But Aunt Judy didn't care now whether they paid the bill or not. Their unconcealed suspicion, as they quizzed her about her care of the door key, had aroused her just indignation. And she threatened, if they ever returned to the farmhouse, to close the door in their faces.

Satisfied now that what Tod and I had mistaken for a ghost was indeed a thief of odd char-

acteristics, I eagerly awaited the coming of nightfall, at which time my daring young master and I intended to secrete ourselves near the tower, in regular detective style, and await results.

Criminals, we had heard, often haunted the scenes of their respective crimes. So it wasn't at all improbable that the book thief would return, at which time we planned to capture him, thus clearing up the mystery of the dead man's unique summer quarters.

The flashlight was coming down the path

CHAPTER XIII

TOD'S NEW CHUM

A WIG with an important paper concealed in it! I never had heard of such a thing. Important papers are usually kept in safes and strong boxes. Still, an odd-minded man might have taken that means of concealing an important document.

An only child, Mr. Harry Barlow should have inherited the dead man's fortune without question. Therefore the swarthy visitor's noticeable agitation as he and his unworthy wife now ransacked the cottage from top to bottom puzzled me. They acted as though they were in danger of losing everything.

Unused to work of this kind, Mrs. Barlow soon wore herself out.

"Have you looked in all of the books?" she inquired of her husband, as I hung around the back door with sharpened ears.

"Yes," the grumpy reply came from above.

"He was in the tower that day. For the neighbors told me about it. He used a ladder, they said. Besides, that's where I found his old green wig."

"Well, there's nothing here."

"The old simpleton! I might have known that he'd do something like this with his money. For he always hated me."

"What did you do with the wig?"

"I threw it into the rubbish basket and Dave Mason later burned it."

"Confound the luck!"

"Have you checked up on the missing books?"

"Yes. They're all juveniles."

"It will pay us, I think, to keep an eye on those Mason boys. For I still believe that the missing books are in their possession."

"They'd never dare to keep the books if they contain what we think."

"Boys of their stamp will dare to do anything, particularly the younger one."

"I still can't comprehend what got into the old gent to draw his money out of the bank and hide it."

"I told you months ago that he was getting childish. That silly library of his proves it. And had you heeded my advice, thus confining him in an asylum, this trouble never would have happened."

"Yes," the husband here appeared at the foot of the stairs, where his wife was resting, "and I might have been disinherited, too."

"Are you any better off now?" came the sarcastic inquiry.

"I thought when we got him to Milwaukee

that we'd have everything our own way. Nor did I wonder at the smug satisfied look that crossed his face when he lay in bed, notwithstanding his earlier threat to disinherit me. But I know now what was going on in his mind. His money, he thought, had been put away where I couldn't get at it."

"According to what the bankers told us, he had the money with him, in big bills, the day he left the wig here. So the thing to do, I think, is to tear down the tower. For having planned it himself, and supervised its construction, it isn't improbable that it contains any number of secret wall pockets."

Unable to do any more that day, the unworthy pair then set out for Milwaukee, leaving with me the exciting belief that the hidden money had already been recovered by the peculiar book thief.

But who could he be? And how had he learned about the secreted wealth?

"Well, what did you find out?" Tod eagerly inquired of his aunt, when he tumbled into the farmhouse that night after school.

"Nothing," came the short reply.

"Are they still here?"

"No."

"When did they leave?"

"About three-thirty."

"I suppose I should have told them about the light that I saw last night."

"I thought of that," nodded Aunt Judy. "But I'm glad now that you didn't tell them. For that undoubtedly would have kept them coming here. And the less I see of them the better I'll like it."

The puzzled look deepened on Tod's face.

"Had it occurred to you, Aunt Judy, that they, themselves, might have been here last night?"

"Laws-a-me, child! What an absurd theory."

"Well, if it wasn't them," came the clever deduction, "I bet it was someone else who has an interest in the old man's affairs."

"But why should anybody, interested in the old gentleman's fortune, break into his summer quarters in the dead of night?"

"That," says Tod, with an emphatic bob of his

head, "is exactly what Tuffy and I are going to find out to-night."

Familiar with my ways, they should have known from my excited actions that I had something to tell them. But instead of questioning me, thus giving me a chance to act out my stuff, Tod, like the big numskull that he was, looked me over to see if I had a bur under my tail. So I quieted down.

Darkness came early that night. For the sky was full of black clouds. And as Tod and I started out at the appointed time a cold north wind whipped our legs.

Having noticed that the water bucket was empty, Dave followed us as far as the pump.

"If it stays like this," says he, glancing in the direction of the darkened lake, "we'll have ducks galore."

"Yah," says Tod, in a disappointed manner, "plenty of ducks but nothing to shoot them with."

"Huber Krebbs was telling me the other day that his father has a shotgun that he seldom uses."

"What does he want for it?"

"Twenty-six bucks."

"Well, if it's a good gun let's buy it."

"But where are we going to get the other six bucks?"

"Jew him down."

Dave laughed dryly.

"Men of Mr. Krebbs' grasping tight-fisted type," says he, "aren't in the habit of lowering their prices to accommodate poor boys."

"Is he the man who sold Mrs. Maloney the sick cow?"

"No, that was his partner, Mr. Levi Simonborn. They've both gotten rich from their crooked stock deals. And now they're adding to their wealth by buying up land mortgages. They haven't any conscience at all, I've been told."

"I'm glad I don't have a father like that," says Tod, thinking of Huber, who, I might add, having gained the forgiveness of Professor Cartright, was still in school.

A cruel, hard man, with stooped shoulders and furtive greedy eyes, Mr. Otto Krebbs had

kicked at me one day in Danbridge. And since then I had hated the sight of him, unprincipled money-grabber that he was.

Arriving at the darkened lake shore, Tod and I secreted ourselves in a big bush. It was too early for the moon. And even if it had been up I doubt if we could have seen it. For the sky, as I say, was a mass of tumbling black clouds.

The steady lapping of the churned water and the mournful howl of the increasing wind got on my nerves. It was a poor night, I told myself, for stuff like this. But I made the best of it, hoping, as I snuggled against my affectionate young master, that the mysterious thief would soon show up.

Still, I told myself sensibly, if he *had* found the hidden money, as I suspected, he would be most unlikely to return.

After what seemed an age to me we caught sight of a moving flashlight. It was coming down the path from the farmhouse. Thinking that it was Dave, Tod got ready to signal, but stopped, with a sharp catch of his breath, as the shadow behind the moving flashlight left the

path and disappeared into the shrubbery near the darkened tower.

Finding the lower windows locked, the prowler then got a ladder and tried to enter the building through an upper window. But here again he met with failure, the owners evidently having nailed the windows shut.

Disposing of the ladder, the prowler, to our surprise, then started back toward the farmhouse, where for several minutes he stood looking in a kitchen window. And having followed, with fast-beating hearts, we saw now that it wasn't a man at all, but a small boy.

Alarmed by a sudden movement within the lighted farmhouse, he first drew back into the shadows, to escape observation, and then moved guardedly toward the unlocked barn where we heard him climb the haymow stairs.

Here was more mystery than we had figured on. And feeling the need of Dave's help, Tod slipped quietly into the farmhouse.

"Well," inquired the grinning older brother, as he sat amid his schoolbooks at the kitchen table, "where's your prisoner?"

"I've got him cornered in the haymow," was the excited reply.

"Let me tell one!"

"Honest," cried Tod. "And it's a boy, too."

After which, getting the facts, Dave hurried into his coat and cap.

"Hello," he called up the haymow stairs. "We know you're there, kid. So you better come down and avoid trouble."

There was a slight movement at the head of the stairs. And then a startled tear-streaked face came into sight.

"Please don't hurt me," came the quavering plea.

"Who are you?" Dave inquired.

"A Madison kid."

"But what are you doing here?"

"My grandfather used to live in a cottage on the lake shore. But he's dead now. He died last Monday. And having no other home I came back here to live till I could get a job."

"How old are you?"

"Twelve."

"Is your name Barlow?"

"That's my middle name."

"Well, what's the rest of it?"

"Russell Barlow Worth."

I could tell by his actions that he was a good boy. I liked his smell, too. So I was glad when Dave took him into the farmhouse, where I learned that he had big black eyes and thick black hair.

"Hey, Aunt Judy!" cried Tod, as we tumbled noisily into the kitchen. "Here's the 'ghost' that Tuffy and I saw last night."

An orphan, and a step-grandson of the dead man's, Russell Worth then told us his story, as he warmed his hands over the kitchen stove.

"I didn't expect Grandpa Barlow to leave me anything. For he really wasn't my grandpa. I just called him that. Still, he was good to me. After my parents' death he sent me money every week so that I could continue my schooling. But my step-uncle told me at the funeral that I needn't expect any more money. So, having to support myself, I set out for the country, thinking that I'd like it better on a farm than working in a factory. I got here yesterday aft-

ernoon. And last night I slept in Grandpa's tower, where, to my surprise, I found that he had written my name in a number of his books. I knew if I asked my mean step-uncle for the books that I'd never get them. So I just took them. They're up in the haymow with my other stuff."

"Hot dog!" cried Tod. "Let's go get them."

"But how did you get into the tower?" quizzed Dave.

"With a ladder."

"And did you know that your step-uncle was here to-day?"

"Sure thing. And it's lucky that I climbed out of the tower at daybreak, taking my books with me. Since then I've been hiding in your barn."

In conclusion, the boy told how he had gone back to the cottage that night to try and find something to eat. But he couldn't get in. So now you know why he was crying when we cornered him in the haymow. Or if you don't know, try going hungry some day and you'll soon find out.

"Can't we let him stay here for awhile, Aunt Judy?" Dave begged, when the other boys had gone to the barn for the mentioned books.

"*Let* him stay?" cried the warm-hearted woman, as she hurriedly set out a lunch. "Laws-a-me! I *want* him to stay. The poor homeless waif! He can sleep with Tod. And very probably they'll raise cain. But I'm not going to let that upset me. For boys will be boys."

He was wearing Mr. Barlow's green wig

CHAPTER XIV

AN ANGRY MISER

IT WAS plain to me now why old Mr. Barlow had hidden his fortune. Had he left his money in a bank the dishonest son would have kept it all, whether he was entitled to it or not. And having made up his mind to favor the more worthy step-grandson, the foxy old gentleman

had put the money where the grasping, scheming son couldn't get at it.

Probably the whole fortune, I told myself with mounting excitement, would be Russell's if he could find it!

He had said nothing about it. Nor did anything fall out of the books when they were brought into the farmhouse. So I quickly dropped my old theory, concluding instead that the young orphan knew nothing about the hidden money.

Yet he should know about it. And it was my duty, I told myself, growing fonder of him each minute, to put him wise. But how in the name of Sam Hill was I going to do it?

Gosh! I suppose I should be thankful that I'm a dog instead of an insignificant tapeworm, or something like that. For I lead a happy carefree life. But there are times when I long for the power of human speech. And particularly did I experience such a longing now.

News travels fast in small communities. So it wasn't long before the curious neighbors learned that a new boy had come to live at

Funny-Bone Farm. When quizzed about the newcomer, Aunt Judy admitted that he was merely a friend of the family. And to ward off added curious questions, she made no mention of his middle name, fearing, I guess, that trouble might develop if the dishonest step-uncle learned of the younger one's presence in the neighborhood.

When the matter of relationships came up for added discussion, I learned that Russell's father was a step-son of the dead man's. That explains how Russ himself, as he now was called by his new friends, was the old gentleman's step-grandson. Step-children and step-grandchildren are not considered relatives in law. So the young orphan, notwithstanding his earlier associations with the dead man, had no legal claim on any part of the latter's estate.

Having been married twice, old Mr. Barlow's second wife was a widow. Her name was Worth. Mr. Harry Barlow was a son of the first wife, who died when he was a small boy. So, as will be seen, there was no actual relationship between Mr. Thomas Worth, Russ' father,

and the dishonest step-uncle. Nor was there any real relationship between the step-uncle and Russ himself.

One afternoon, shortly after the newcomer's appearance in the neighborhood, Aunt Judy's attention was drawn to the lane by a creaking country wagon.

"Laws-a-me!" she gave vent to the usual exclamation, as the wagon turned into the farmyard. "It's Mr. Levi Simonborn. Now I wonder what *he* wants."

Mr. Levi Simonborn! That, I told myself, recalling the recent conversation between Tod and Dave, was the name of the scoundrel who had sold old Mrs. Maloney the sick cow. And curious to learn what he looked like, undoubted two-legged skunk that he was, I waited impatiently at the door.

What I saw, when the door opened, was a tall, gaunt, hungry-looking man with a hooked nose and wolfish eyes, who, when invited to enter, hadn't the decency to remove his dirty rubbers at the door or even excuse himself for keeping them on.

This, I learned, was Mr. Levi Simonborn's way, grasping, tight-fisted man that he was. Having grown rich at the community's expense, he further held the neighbors in his power by lending them money at a high rate of interest. In fact money lending was now his chief business.

Turned against him as much by his greasy smell as his uninviting appearance, and satisfied that he had come here for no good purpose, I prepared myself, in case he started trouble, to grab him by the seat of the pants and shake him up. But his talk was peaceful enough at the start.

"Um . . ." he grunted, as he gave free rein to his wolfish eyes, thus familiarizing himself with every detail of the pleasing room. "Awful chilly weather fur September."

"Yes," was Aunt Judy's prim reply, "it *is* unseasonably cool."

"Hens layin' much?"

"Not as well as I'd like to see them."

And all the time, as I stood beside the visitor's chair, I kept wondering at his odd smell.

It, for some reason, seemed vaguely familiar.

Then, as I caught Aunt Judy glancing curiously at his bared head, having evidently detected a change in his personal appearance, I tumbled to the truth of the astounding situation.

He was wearing old Mr. Barlow's green wig!

Gee-miny crickets gosh! I felt like jumping on him then and there. And only Aunt Judy's sharp commands held me back.

"Um . . ." the visitor proceeded, in his mumbling way. "What's this I hear about you havin' a new boy in the family."

Aunt Judy thought carefully before she replied.

"Yes," she finally admitted, wondering, I guess, what interest a man of Mr. Levi Simonborn's type could have in the young orphan, "we have a new boy staying here."

"Relative of yours?"

"No, sir."

"Orphan?"

"So I understand."

There was a flicker of satisfaction in the wolfish eyes.

"Um . . . I heard from one of the neighbors that he was an orphan. Of course," the added words were accompanied by a quick uplift of the shaggy eyebrows, "you hain't a-goin' to keep him much longer."

Aunt Judy rightfully considered this an unwarranted intrusion in her personal affairs. So her reply was a trifle haughty.

"That, Mr. Simonborn, is something that we'll work out for ourselves."

"Humph!" grunted the visitor, with an ugly look on his face. "They hain't nothin' to work out. It's purely a case of decidin' whether or not you kin afford to feed another mouth. An' you know very well that you kain't."

So indignant was Aunt Judy now that she fairly quivered in her chair. And satisfied that she'd soon need my help, I got ready for business. But she again ordered me back.

"Please bear in mind, Mr. Simonborn, that you are a guest in this house. And as its mistress I am entitled to some respect."

But the rebuke was wasted on the calloused money-lender.

"They hain't no use of you gittin' uppish, Miss Mason," he spoke bluntly. "You've done that with me before. An' while I took it without sayin' nothin' it didn't fit fur two cents' worth, if you must know the plain truth of the matter. Considerin' my generosity in lettin' that line fence of yours stay where you put it, when we both know that it's on my land, without even chargin' you pasture rent nor nothin', sech stuck-up actions, to my notion, are entirely out of place. As fur me speakin' plainly, which is one of my characteristics, you should know by this time that an important part of my business in this community lies in keepin' posted on my neighbors' affairs. The result is that I know their circumstances as well as I know my own. In your own particular case I know, too, that you're an honest woman as well as a poor one. You hain't actually tryin' to steal my land. But the fence is there. An' if I was to bring in a surveyor I dare say you'd lose a great deal more of your lake-shore property than you suspect. However, I'm willin' to let our boundary line stand, if you act sensible."

Aunt Judy leaned forward.

"Just what do you mean?" she inquired icily.

"This orphan boy is an added expense to you, Miss Mason. So the sensible thing fur you to do is to turn him over to me. Fur I need him an' you don't. He kin do chores fur his board an' keep. An' if he turns out to be a good worker I'll gladly give him ten cents a week fur spendin' money. On top of that he kin keep on goin' to school, if he starts his chores early enough in the mornin' an' comes home promptly at night. He'll have a good home. An', of course, as I jest mentioned, it'll be a great financial relief to you to git him off your hands. I purposely come late to pick him up after school an' take him home with me. So, while we're awaitin' his arrival, it might be a good plan fur you to git his duds together. Fur they hain't no use of us wastin' time."

Here Tod tumbled into the kitchen in his usual tumultuous way.

"Hi, Tuffy!" he cried. "Hi, Aunt Judy! What do you know—I got ninety-nine in my science test to-day. Pretty good, don't you think?"

Then, as he caught sight of the lowering visitor, he brought out a handful of tickets.

"Can I sell you a couple, Mr. Simonborn?"

"What are they?" came the grumpy inquiry.

"Tickets to our operetta."

"Humph!" the miser instinctively pinched his pocketbook. "I don't fool away my savings on sech folderol as school plays."

"But we're raising money for a new piano."

"Pianos is nonsense, too."

Plainly anxious to get away, the visitor then arose and peered down the lane.

"Where's the other boy?" he inquired gruffly.

A quick glance passed between Tod and his aunt.

"Who do you mean?" came the guarded inquiry. "My brother Dave?"

"No. I mean the new boy."

Having handled the smelly green wig himself, it surprised me that the newcomer hadn't recognized it before this. For it neither fit its wearer nor matched his remaining fringe of hair. But the younger one's thoughts, I guess, were wholly of his new friend.

In the short time that they had known each other the boys, so alike in their impulsive warm-hearted ways, had become deeply attached to each other. Of the same age, they were almost constantly together, sharing the same bed, eating side by side and studying out of the same schoolbooks. So it isn't surprising that Tod now showed considerable concern as the thought fixed itself in his mind that some added misfortune was about to descend on the seemingly luckless young orphan.

"Are you waiting for Russ?" came the added, guarded inquiry.

"Yes," was the farmer's short reply.

"Why?"

"He's goin' to work fur me."

And as though she needed some such decisive remark as this to stiffen her courage, Aunt Judy stepped forward, her face the picture of determination.

Very well indeed did she know the kind of an unhappy, nagged-at, cuffed-around life that a boy would lead on the money-lender's farm. The last orphan who had worked there had run

away because of mistreatment. And now it infuriated the big-hearted woman to think that the greedy miser, who purposely sought unprotected orphans, had singled out one of *her* boys.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Simonborn," she spoke firmly. "But Russell Worth is *not* going to work for you. As long as he remains in the neighborhood he is going to live with us."

Unused to opposition of this kind, the man flew into a rage.

"Fool!" he cried. "You *would* keep him here and feed him when, as everybody knows, you're as poor as a church mouse. You hain't got good sense. But mark my word, woman, unless you knuckle down to me you're goin' to suffer. I'm not so sure that I kain't take away every bit of lake-shore property that you've got. An' I'll do it, too, if you further oppose me."

Dumfounded at first by the unexpected outburst, Tod now leaped into action.

"Don't you dare to talk that way to my Aunt Judy," he cried, facing the giant with flashing eyes, "or I'll knock the stuffing out of you."

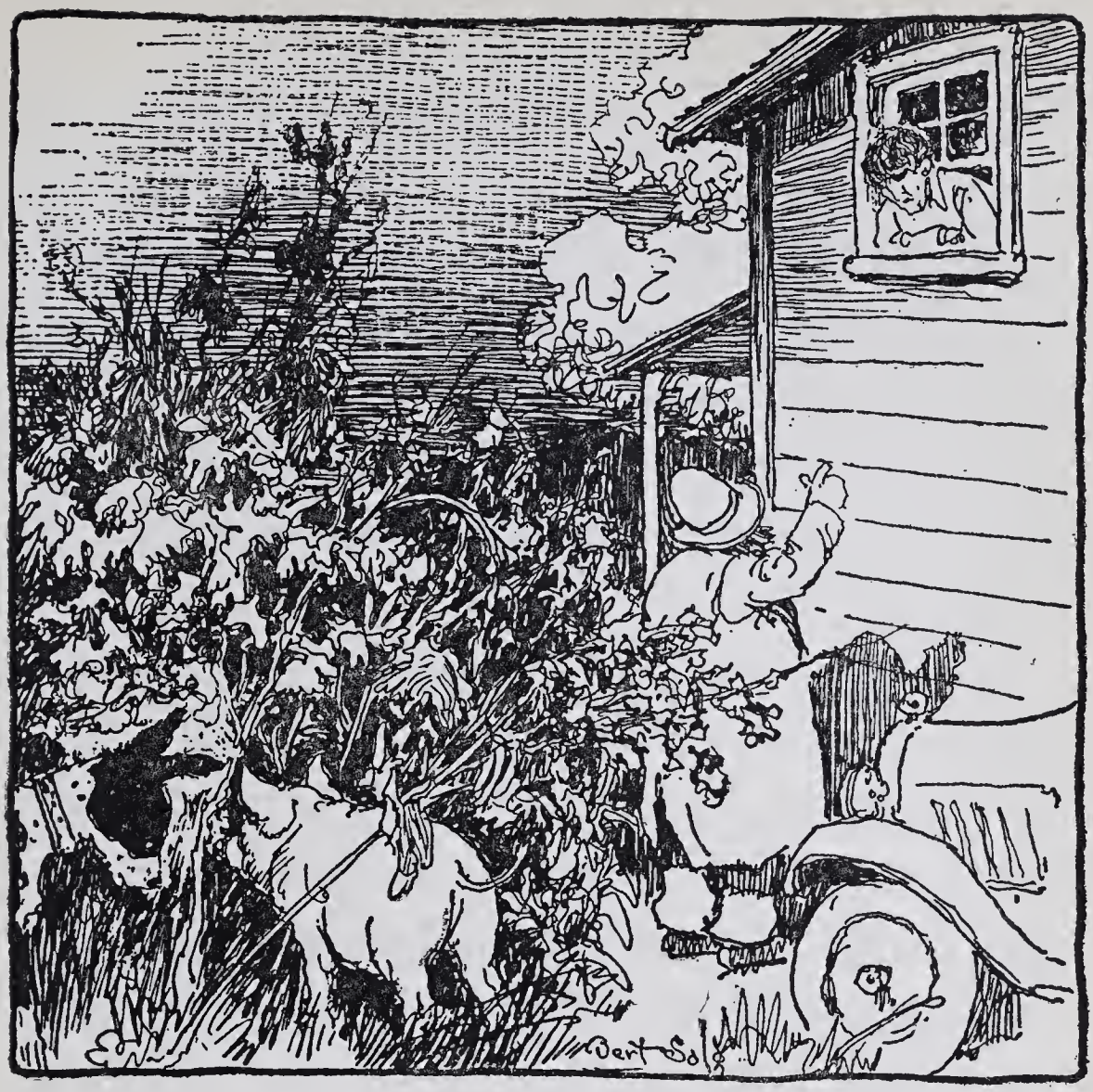
And then, just I got ready to sink my teeth into the old buzzard's rear scenery, the door opened and in walked Dave.

"What the dickens! . . ." he stared, amazed by the scene that met his eyes.

"Pitch into him, Dave, and we'll knock the gizzard out of him. For he called Aunt Judy a fool."

But the peace-loving guardian soon put a stop to that.

"If my fence is on your land," she quietly told the furious visitor, "I'll have it moved. And until then, please keep away from here."



Tuffy and Suds "listen in"

CHAPTER XV

AN EVIL CONSPIRACY

I WAS the only one in the family who knew the truth about the lost wig. I had learned its secrets and I now knew its whereabouts.

Aunt Judy knew nothing about its secrets, for the Barlows had been very careful to keep these secrets to themselves. Nor did Russ himself

know anything at all about the hidden fortune.

I had led Gertie to believe that the wig had been burned. And having ordered it burned, the Barlows themselves hadn't the slightest idea that it was still on earth.

But peculiarly it had been saved; then lost; and now, as I say, I knew where it was.

Whoopee!

I couldn't tell Aunt Judy where it was. And oddly it never occured to her that the miser's new head covering was the selfsame wig that Tod had lost in the weeds. Nor had Tod himself, or Dave either, recognized the wig.

People can't be expected to recover things they know nothing about. So I decided to save the wig myself, thus putting Russ, now as dear to me as my own young master, on easy street.

Tuffy Bean the hero! That's what I'd be, all right, if I tripped up the unsuspecting miser and snitched his wig. Having gained possession of the smelly headpiece I felt sure that I could make Aunt Judy and the others realize that it contained a valuable document. Or, if I failed in doing that, I could easily separate the wig

myself, thus exposing the important hidden paper.

After which, of course, everything would be pie and ice cream for Russ. Dear old Russ!

Gee! It tickled me to think that he was going to be rich. He had had a lot of hard luck, having lost his parents when he was a small boy. Nor had he the slightest idea that fortune was about to thump loudly on his front door.

He sure would be grateful to me, all right. And how proud the others would be of me! Take Aunt Judy for instance. No longer would she fret over scattered dog hairs. To the contrary, she'd feel honored even if she found a piece of my scalp floating around in her soup.

But what a shock it would be to old Simonborn, unscrupulous penny-pincher that he was, when he learned the truth about the wig that he had been wearing so contentedly. The wig really was worth its weight in diamonds. But he knew nothing of that. Which, to me, was the funny part.

He certainly would have a cat-fit when the truth came out.

Men of the right sort aren't in the habit of wearing cast-off wigs. But a miser will wear anything if by so doing he can add a few more pennies to his guarded hoard.

Yet how odd, was my added thought, that the lost wig had been picked up by a man of that type. Very probably he had seen the wig in the weeds while driving by. And stopping, he had tried it on. Ah-ha! Here was a fine chance to protect his bald head from the chill September breezes. And so, very well pleased with his find, he had driven on, determined to make the wig a regular part of his attire thereafter. What little hair he had left was iron gray. So the green wig stood out conspicuously when he bared his head, which explains why Aunt Judy had been so quick to notice it. But he didn't mind that.

"Is it true, Aunt Judy," Dave gravely inquired that evening, while Tod and Russ sat beside the crackling kitchen fire, "that our line fence is on Mr. Simonborn's land?"

"So he contends," spoke the still unnerved guardian.

"And are you really going to hire a surveyor, as you said?"

"I think I should," came the grave reply.

The troubled look deepened in Dave's expressive eyes.

"Gosh! I hope we don't have to give up our whole lake shore. For that's the most valuable part of our farm. And I had looked forward to the time when we could split it up into building lots."

"He can't take all of the lake shore away from us," came the confident assertion. "For that section of the farm is definitely specified in my abstract, which was approved by the family lawyer at the time of the purchase."

Dave became curious.

"How did you come to buy the farm in the first place, Aunt Judy?" he inquired.

"I did it to accommodate an old school teacher of mine. She needed the money; and having plenty to do with at that time I took the farm off her hands, never dreaming that I'd later make it my home. But here we are! And now it would seem that I have a fight on my

hands to maintain my rights here. But Mr. Simonborn, notwithstanding his wealth and influence, will get nothing from me that he isn't entitled to by law."

Russ got up, thus ending the checker game.

"I'd like to work for him, Aunt Judy," the boy spoke earnestly.

"What?" stared the elder, as a general silence fell over the others.

"I'm big enough to take care of myself," came the sturdy assertion. "And I should earn my own living."

Even Aunt Judy was silent now.

"God bless you," she finally spoke in a choked voice. "You're deserving of a happier life than you've known in the past. And I'm going to see that you get it."

"Yah," put in Tod, in his impetuous way, "and I'm going to see that old Simonborn gets a crack in the mug, too, if he tries any more funny stuff around here. The old buzzard! I should have beaned him with the organ stool."

Russ didn't want to leave Funny-Bone Farm. For he was immeasurably happy in his new

home. But he was willing to sacrifice himself if it would quiet the old miser.

Aunt Judy, though, would have none of that.

"You're going to stay here," she declared, "until you find a better home. So let us say no more about it."

"But I don't want to get you into trouble," Russ persisted, with increasing anxiety.

"You're not getting me into trouble."

"But he told you that he'd go easy on you if you'd give me up."

"If my line fence is on his land," Aunt Judy spoke sensibly, "I'd have to move it sooner or later. For he isn't the kind of a man to give up an inch of land. So why not call in the surveyor and settle the matter now?"

"Just the same," Russ hung on doggedly, "I think I ought to leave."

"If you do," Tod spoke loyally, "I'm going with you."

Here Suds gave an ear-splitting squeal. And how he laughed when the boys tumbled out of the farmhouse, fully expecting, I guess, to encounter a marauding bear.

"What's the matter with you?" I inquired, when we were alone.

"Nothing," says he, as a happy little grin spread over his face.

"But why did you squeal?" I persisted.

"Oh," says he, "I just felt lonesome."

It's fun to go hunting with him. So I helped him out of his pen. But instead of heading for the adjacent marsh, as I expected, he lit out down the moonlit country road.

"What's the big idea?" says I, following him.

"You ought to know," says he.

Nor could I get any more out of him till we came within sight of a tall, gaunt weathered farmhouse.

I had passed the cheerless place many times. But this was the first time that I had stopped in the yard.

"Who lives here?" says I curiously.

"Old Simonborn," says he.

I was staring now.

"And did you know," says I, after a moment or two, "that I was planning to trip him up and snitch his wig?"

"I probably know a great deal more than you suspect," says he, with a funny little laugh. "For I've got eyes and ears. But let's not talk about it now. If you want the wig, bark your head off. And when he comes outside to see what's wrong, I'll trip him up."

Again I had to feel around for my voice.

"Suds," says I, as I loved him with my eyes, "you're a swell little pig."

"Thanks," says he.

Then, as a rickety old automobile drove into the farmyard, we ducked out of sight.

"Who is it?" says Suds, as a stoop-shouldered old man got out of the car and shuffled toward the darkened farmhouse, the occupants of which seemingly had gone to bed immediately after supper.

I stiffened.

"It's old Krebbs," says I shortly.

"And who might he be?" Suds followed up.

"Levi Simonborn's business partner," says I.

"Two of a kind, huh?" was Suds' wise comment.

"Nothing else but," says I.

"Well," he grinned, in that daring way of his, "I suppose we *can* mess up the both of them if necessary."

"Sh-h-h-h!" says I, as a light appeared in an upper window in response to the visitor's knock. "Let's listen and hear what they have to say to each other."

And it's well, let me tell you, that we did listen. Otherwise poor Aunt Judy might have lost everything.

"Well," inquired the awakened farmer, when he came downstairs after a brief exchange of words with his partner through the open bedroom window, "what do you want?"

"I just got back from the county seat where I had a long talk with the new surveyor about that line fence of yours. You're all wrong about it bein' on your land. If anything it's on Miss Mason's land, as an accurate survey will prove."

Gee! I guess you can imagine how tickled I was to hear that. But old blunderbuss wasn't tickled for two cents' worth.

"I don't believe it," he snapped, as he stood in the moonlight beside the visitor's automobile.

"Fur I measured the land myself. An' steel tapes don't lie."

"The trouble is you didn't start measurin' from the right place. Tamarack trees don't live furever. An' the one mentioned in your abstract has bin dead fur years. Even the stump has rotted away."

"Then what proof is there," came the crafty inquiry, "that there ever was a tamarack in that purticular spot?"

"According to the surveyor's records there's an iron stake buried in the ground."

"Did he tell you that?"

"He did."

"An' has he ever seen the stake?"

"I don't think so."

"Then he never will. Fur to-night me an' you are goin' to find that stake an' pull it up. Then no one kin prove that I didn't start my measurin' from the right spot."

"But what are you going to do with the lake-shore land after you git it?"

"Lay it out in buildin' lots. I'll clean up several thousand dollars on the deal. An' if the

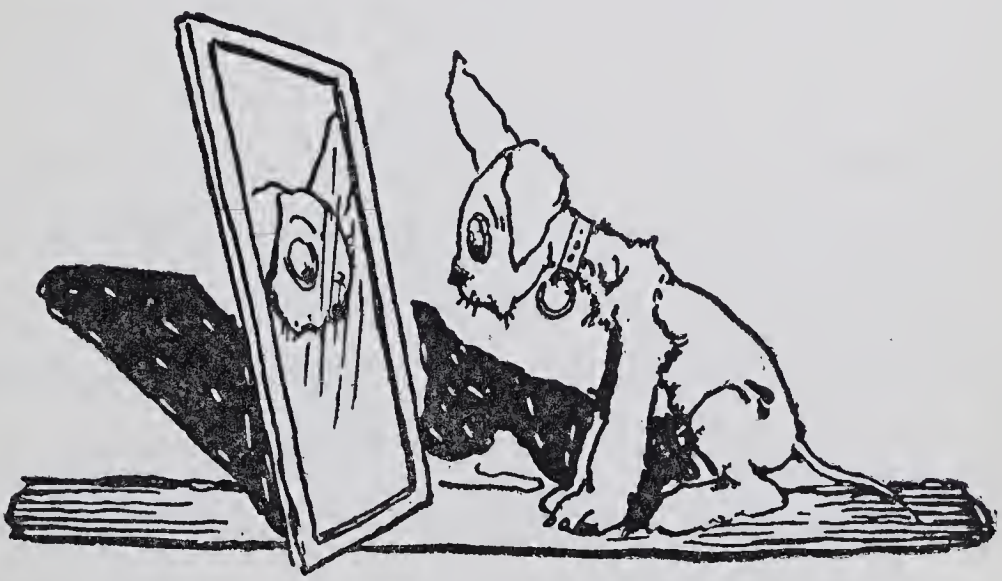
present owner tries to interfere with me I'll take the whole farm away from her. I kin do it," came the vicious assertion. "An' I *will* do it, an' do it with pleasure, if I meet with any interference."

Krebbs gave a throaty, chilly laugh.

"You're a hard-hearted old pirate."

"I'm a money-maker, the same as you. An' I don't propose to have my plans upset by a woman. Fur years I've had my eyes on that lake-shore property. Once I had a mortgage on it. That's the time the school teacher owned it. She inherited it direct from old Froney Bohen, from whom the lake got its name, only everybody nowadays calls it Funny-Bone. Knowin' how hard up the school teacher was, I thought sure that I'd git the land on a foreclosure. Then, drat it, that old maid stepped in. I've hated her ever since. An' now I hate her worse than ever. Fur when I went over there to-day to hire the strange boy who's livin' there, havin' heard that he was an orphan, she ordered me out of the house. But I'll git even with her. An' I'll bring that boy to time, too."

Getting a spade and a flashlight the unworthy pair then set out for the lake shore, where they intended to dig up the iron stake that marked the north-west boundary of Aunt Judy's little farm. And determined that they shouldn't remove the important stake, even if we had to stand back to back and fight them off, Suds and I took after them lickety-cut.



He landed head-first into the muck

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE SWAMP

PIGS are pretty clever when it comes to ducking and dodging. At least Suds was. He could turn twice as quickly as me. But I could easily out-distance him on the straightaway.

Knowing this, he told me, as we hotfooted it down the moonlit country road, to go ahead.

He'd find me when he got to the lake shore, he said. But I didn't like to leave him behind, faithful little pal that he was. So I kept pace with him.

And all the time the rickety car that we were following kept getting farther and farther away from us. But that didn't worry us. For we knew where the men were heading for. Soon they'd have to stop the car and hoof it across a boggy marsh. That's when we'd gain on them. For they'd have to pick their way, step by step, while we in turn could zip along as snappy as ever. So it wasn't at all improbable, I told Suds, that we'd get to the lake shore first.

The dirty crooks! It meant nothing at all to them that Aunt Judy was a poor hard-working woman. All she had left was the little lake-shore farm. Without it she and the children would be destitute. Simonborn knew that. But having set his greedy eyes on the farm he now intended to steal it and crowd her out. Which shows you how low men can get when they think only of money.

Passing Mrs. Maloney's squat cabin we soon

came within sight of the lake. And there, at the foot of the hill, was the marsh which figured so prominently in the early surveys.

As I understood it, an out-standing tamarack in this marsh had served as a landmark. Since then the huge tree had toppled over and rotted away. Simonborn had started his measurements from another huge tree, which gave him land that didn't belong to him. And now it was his evil scheme to prove that the second tree was the right tree.

"Did you ever meet a wild boar at night?" says Suds, as we paused momentarily at the edge of the dank shadowy swamp.

"No," says I, wondering at the question, "nor in the daytime either."

"But what would you do," he followed up, "if you did meet a wild boar at night?"

"I'd drown it," was my nonsensical reply.

"And what would old Simonborn do if *he* met a wild boar at night?" persisted Suds, in whose fertile mind evidently some kind of an odd scheme was taking shape.

"He'd shoot it," says I.

"But suppose he had no gun?"

"In that case," says I, "he'd probably take to his heels and beat it."

"Fine!" chuckled Suds. "I figured he'd do that; and old Krebbs, too. So let's get going."

"Don't tell me," I grinned, familiar with his crazy methods, "that you're going to put on a scene in the middle of the swamp."

"Listen, Fido," says he, in his comical way. "When I get dew on my tail I'm the wildest boar that you ever set eyes on. In fact I often give lessons to some of my wild cousins. So prepare yourself for a real treat."

"And what am I supposed to do?" says I, sort of disappointed-like. "Sit on the side lines and applaud?"

"Do what you set out to do," says he.

"Meaning which?" says I.

"When I trip 'em up, grab the wig and beat it."

Thus reminded of the wig, I agreed with him that we'd never have a better chance to recover it. So we hurried into the swamp, where we soon overtook our unsuspecting victims.

"Be careful that you don't step from the path," cautioned old Simonborn, in a deep voice, as he led the way with a flashlight.

"What are we walkin' on?" Krebbs then spoke in turn. "Logs?"

"Mostly. They were put here by old Froney Bohen. An' them black spots that you see beside the path are muck holes."

"Humph!"

"I've heard they haven't any bottom. So watch your step."

"Where's the lake?" Krebbs then inquired.

"Up ahead of us."

"An' is this the land you're tryin' to steal from Miss Mason?"

"No; this is my own land. Hers is high an' dry. That's why I want it. But you needn't blurt out that way about me stealin' it."

Krebbs then became more wheedling in his manner.

"I ought to git somethin' out of this deal, Levi."

"I'll take care of you," the miser promised.

This brought a chuckle from Suds.

"I have a feeling," says he, "that they're both going to get plenty."

"*And* how," says I spiritedly.

"Let's go," says he eagerly.

"But what if they fall into one of the muck holes," says I, "and never come up?"

"So much the better," says he cheerfully.

"What's that?" cried Krebbs, sort of startled-like, as the "wild boar" separated himself from a blood-curdling squeal.

"Sounds like a pig to me," spoke Simonborn, in the same startled manner.

"Look out! Here he comes!"

"Jumpin' Jupiter! It's a wild boar."

"Ouch!"

Following which there was a sort of gooey splash as one of the unworthy pair landed head-first in the muck.

It looked like Krebbs to me. It smelt like him, too. But Suds said it was Simonborn. And fearful that he'd lose the wig in the muck hole, I jumped on top of him, but found, when I grabbed the wig with my teeth, that he had it glued to his head.

I hung on though. And after a lot of pulling and tugging I finally got the blamed thing loose.

Both men were now floundering around in the muck. And satisfied with our night's work Suds and I beat it for home, where I discovered that what I had in my mouth wasn't a wig at all, but a hunk of real hair.

"What are you going to do with it?" laughed Suds, who knew all the time, I guess, that he had sicked me onto the wrong man. "Mount it on a pole, like the south-sea head-hunters?"

I couldn't joke about it like him. For I was sincerely disappointed. Besides, I felt kind of sorry for old Krebbs. Not that he deserved my sympathy. But I couldn't forget how he yelled.

Having followed us out of the swamp, the two mud-caked conspirators got into their automobile and drove away, one complaining about a lame leg and the other about a sore head. They still believed that they had been attacked by a vicious wild boar. And satisfied that they'd give the swamp a wide berth hereafter, especially at night, Suds and I sought our beds.

When Tod awakened the following morning

he found a note on his dresser, which was the first intimation that any of us had that Russ had skinned out during the night.

"Oh, Aunt Judy! Oh, Dave! Look! Here's a note from Russ. He's gone."

"Gone?" cried the startled elder, as she followed me to the foot of the stairs. "What do you mean?"

"Dear Aunt Judy," Tod then read aloud. "I'm sorry that you got into trouble on my account. And to make it easier for you I'm going over to Mr. Simonborn's house to-night to start working for him. I'll stay there until I know you're safe. And if he uses me good I may stay all winter. For I've got to have a home; and I'm willing to work. So I'll be all right, though, until I find out for sure what I'm going to do, I may not go back to school. I'm leaving my books here. For Tod is reading them. Anyway, I'd rather have them here. Some day when I get big I'll pay you back for all the kind things you've done for me."

Tod felt pretty blue that morning. His chum was gone! No longer would he have "good old

Russ," as he affectionately spoke of the orphan boy, to fool with in and out of school. Their friendly battles and rough-and-tumble wrestling bouts were a thing of the past. *I* was there. But he never noticed me. And feeling hurt, I crawled under the front porch.

Shortly after the children left for school, at the usual time, a Danbridge truck clattered down the lane. And great indeed was Aunt Judy's excitement when she learned that a crew of local workmen were going to dismantle the Lighthouse under the direct supervision of its owners, proof in itself that something of more than ordinary value had been lost or hidden in the cottage.

"It's money," she excitedly told Dave, when he came home from school at four-thirty. "I found out from Mrs. Nebber. Hearing that the cottage was being torn down, she hurried over here to quizz me. And while I wasn't a bit pleased to see her at first, traveling newspaper that she is, I was glad afterwards that she came. For she told me in confidence that the Barlows have completely lost track of thirty

thousand dollars of the old gentleman's fortune. As I understand it, the old man drew the money out of the bank last summer and hid it, which explains why they hurried out here so soon after the funeral to search the cottage. They found nothing that day. So now they're tearing the cottage down board by board."

Dave was naturally amazed.

"But how did Mrs. Nebber find out about it?" he inquired.

"Her sister Carrie was with the old gentleman when he died. A nurse, Carrie was told when she took the case that the patient hadn't been in his right mind for months. Yet his head cleared up in the end. 'My son will want everything,' he told the nurse, just before his death. 'And it is no more than right that he should have my Milwaukee property. But that which is hidden is to be Russell's. For he is as dear to me as an own grandson.' "

"Thirty thousand dollars!" cried Dave. Then he caught his breath. "But what will happen if Mr. Barlow finds the hidden money? Will he keep it?"

"That's his intention."

"Gee! The old man had a whole purseful of money the day he rented our boat."

"Where did he go in the boat?"

"Over to the island."

"Then it may be that he hid the money there," came the exciting deduction.

Here Tod burst into the farmhouse with a newspaper in his hands.

"Aunt Judy! Dave! I found something in the newspaper about Russ. Listen: 'If young R. B. W., last seen in Milwaukee on September 26, will communicate with me, I will help him establish his claim to his step-grandfather's fortune. Confidential. Address, Mr. Gallup, Room 902, Law Building, Milwaukee, Wis.' "

"Gallup," Aunt Judy puzzled over the name, struck by its familiar sound. "Gallup," she repeated. Then her face brightened. "Why, I remember now! That was Mrs. Nebber's name before she was married."

It was clear to everybody now how the Milwaukee lawyer had found out about the lost fortune. He had gotten the story from his sister,

the nurse. Nor was it improbable that he even knew the exact location of the hidden money.

So the thing for Russ to do, the family decided, with growing excitement, was to hurry to Milwaukee. And given the job of secretly carrying the exciting story to his chum, Tod set out after supper in the direction of the Simonborn farm, little suspecting the cause of my dejection as I followed at his heels.

Having set my heart on snitching the miser's wig, as recorded, it disappointed me now to learn that this heroic gesture on my part would be unnecessary.

Instead of hanging my head though I would have bubbled with excitement if I had known of the thrilling adventure that I was heading into.

Matters were coming to a climax a great deal faster than I realized.

We found the treasure at last

CHAPTER XVII

TREASURE ISLAND

SIMONBORN was too stingy to keep a dog. So Tod and I met with no interference when we guardedly entered the darkening farmyard.

Mrs. Simonborn was moving about the kitchen in a spiritless, slovenly way. We could see her through one of the dirty windows. But

of the other members of the family there was no sign.

Still, we knew that Russ was here. For we noticed his heavy rubbers outside the kitchen door.

"Find him, Tuffy," commanded Tod. So around the house I went, stopping when I caught sight of a dim light in the attic room over the kitchen.

A low-roofed wood shed attached to the rear of the house made it possible for Tod and I to climb up and look in the window. And just as we expected, there was Russ lying on a bed.

Everything in Aunt Judy's home is bright and pretty. For she's a good housekeeper. But here everything was dingy and dirty. So I didn't wonder at the unhappy, hopeless look on Russ' face.

However, we soon changed that.

Frightened at first by our unexpected appearance, he and Tod then fell into each other's arms, like the loving chums that they were.

"Say, Russ," Tod spoke excitedly, "here's some money that Aunt Judy sent to you. It's

enough for your bus fare to Milwaukee. And when you get there to-morrow morning you're to call on a man by the name of Gallup in the Law Building."

Russ looked puzzled.

"But why should I go to Milwaukee?"

After which, having heard the complete story, he was even more excited than his chum. Thirty thousand dollars! The thought of owning such a vast fortune, if he could find it, made him want to jump and shout.

"Where's old Shylock?" Tod then inquired.

"In Danbridge, I guess."

"How do you like him?"

"Oof! He's so dirty he stinks."

"If you were to ask me," says Tod, as he glanced at the dingy walls and scant furniture, "the whole house stinks."

"They gave me this room," Russ then explained, "because there's a register in the floor close to the kitchen stove."

Tod had already spied the register. And spreading out on the floor he now peered into the lower room.

"It doesn't look much like Aunt Judy's kitchen," he commented.

Russ grimaced.

"You ought to eat some of Mrs. Simonborn's cooking! Still, I shouldn't run her down. For she's nagged at so much by her husband, who even begrudges her the food that she eats, that it's a wonder she has any ambition at all."

"How does he use you?" Tod inquired.

"A whole lot better than I expected. He even offered to adopt me. Can you imagine that?"

Tod laughed.

"Russell Barlow Worth Simonborn," says he. "Some name."

"His offer puzzled me at first. I couldn't understand it. But I think I know now why he wants to adopt me. Evidently he knows about the thirty thousand dollars. And, of course, if he can get me he'll get the money, too."

"After what you told me about your step-grandpa," says Tod, "it kind of puzzled me to understand why he left you out of his will."

"I didn't expect him to will me anything. For while I called him grandpa he really wasn't

my grandpa. He was my father's step-father."

"If he did mention you in his will," says Tod, "his son probably took the will and burned it up."

"He doesn't like me," Russ admitted, referring to his rascally step-uncle.

"Huh!" snorted Tod. "For that matter who likes him?"

"It's a cinch *I* don't. You should have seen how mean he was to me at the funeral. 'You needn't hang around here,' he told me, 'for you've got all you're going to get.' "

"I'm scared to death," says Tod, "that he'll find the money and steal it on you. For that's his intention."

"Yes," nodded Russ, with a grave face, "and he'd take those books away from me if he knew I had them."

Tod's imagination jumped into high gear.

"Do you suppose," he advanced the exciting theory, "that there's any connection between the books and the hidden money?"

"Gee! There might be."

"Did your grandpa ever tell you that he was

going to leave you the books in which he wrote your name?"

"No. I just happened to look in them the night I was in the tower. And finding my name in them I took them. I felt that I had a right to."

"Bu-lieve me," waggled Tod, "I'm going to go through those books with a magnifying glass when I get home."

"And did you say that my step-uncle is tearing down the cottage?"

"Sure thing. And everybody knows now that he's searching for hidden money. For he and his wife watch every move that the workmen make."

"I wonder what he'd say if he knew that I had been in the cottage since grandpa's funeral?"

"He'd probably have you arrested."

"All I took was the books."

"Of course. But he'd never believe that until you proved it."

There was more talk then about the Milwaukee lawyer's advertisement.

"If your uncle sees it," says Tod, "he'll probably go to Milwaukee himself. So the thing for you to do is to get there first."

Here the telephone rang in the lower room.

"Hello," spoke the farm woman, in a weary voice. "No," she added, "my husband isn't home. But I expect him any minute. What's the name, please? Oh! . . . You're Mr. Gallup, the Milwaukee lawyer. My husband told me that he had seen your ad in the newspaper. Yes, if you'll come over in an hour or so you'll surely find him here. Good-by."

As you can imagine it was a big surprise to the boys, and to me, too, to thus learn that the Milwaukee lawyer was in the immediate neighborhood! More amazing still, he was on his way to the farmhouse!

"Do you suppose," says Tod, searching his chum's face, "that old Simonborn has called the lawyer here to make out the adoption papers?"

"I'd sooner think," Russ spoke wisely, "that they're planning to gyp me. For no man of the right sort would hang around old Simonborn."

"Gee! I bet you're right."

"To prove it, I'm going to stay here and hear what they say."

"I'm with you, old kid."

"How about Tuffy?"

"You needn't worry about him."

Having scribbled a note, which she left on the kitchen table, the weary farm woman then went off to bed in another part of the rambling house.

"Let's have your pocket knife," says Russ.

Smearing the knife with chewing gum, and tying a string to it, the ingenious orphan boy then fished through the floor register until he secured the note, which read as follows:

> Lawyer Gallup of Milwaukee called up from the Nebber farm, where he is staying with his sister. He is coming over to see you to-night.

Weighting the note with a safety pin the boys hurriedly dropped it through the opening when they heard the farmer drive into the yard.

"Gosh!" cried Russ, as he followed the note with his eyes. "It fell on the floor."

Nor did the farmer notice the note when he

came into the house. So it was considerable of a surprise to him, as his actions showed, when the lawyer appeared on the scene.

"Why such exaggerated amazement, Simonborn?" inquired the oily-voiced sleek-looking visitor, as he stepped into the farmhouse. "Didn't your wife tell you that I was coming over to-night?"

"I jest got home. An' she's upstairs in bed."

There was a scuffle of chairs as the two men seated themselves beside the stove.

"Well," the lawyer began, "I got your letter this afternoon. And as I seldom put off matters of importance, I came out to see you right away. . . . Is the boy here?"

"Jest a minute, Gallup."

Watching through the floor register we saw the farmer arise and leave the room. Then the stairs creaked under his stealthy tread.

"Quick!" breathed Tod, blowing out the lamp. "Get into your bed and cover up."

Finding the room of his chore boy in darkness the farmer struck a match, thus satisfying himself that the room's occupant was in bed.

It never occurred to the snooper to look *under* the bed. Nor did he light a second match. For Russ to all outward appearances was sound asleep.

"Wough!" breathed Tod, when the danger was over. "That was a narrow squeak for us."

Having returned to the kitchen, the farmer explained his actions to the curious visitor.

"The boy sleeps right over our heads, Gallup, where you see that open floor register. So I thought I'd better go up an' make sure he was asleep."

"I see you're limping," commented the observing visitor.

"Humph. I hurt my leg last night in a swamp."

"What were you doing?—hunting?"

"No," came the short reply.

"Is the boy asleep?"

"Yes."

"How long has he been here?"

"He came last night."

"And are you really going to adopt him?"

"I will if it kin be arranged."

The lawyer gave a queer cold laugh.

"Are you sure it's the boy you want, or his money?"

"Um . . ." the miser rubbed his hands. "How much money is he worth, Gallup?"

"Around thirty thousand dollars."

"Um . . ." the miser again massaged his horny hands.

"To be perfectly frank with you, Simonborn, it would have pleased me better if you had kept out of the deal. But as you have the advantage of me in holding the boy, I suppose the thing for me to do is to go fifty-fifty with you, as we did on that land deal several years ago."

"Yes, yes," came the greedy acceptance. "Fifty-fifty. We will be fair with each other, Gallup."

The lawyer's lips curled slightly, showing that he well knew the type of man he was dealing with. But, to that point, they were a good pair.

"Here's the story, Simonborn: Last summer Mr. Andrew Barlow, whom you probably know, conceived the somewhat picturesque

scheme, in the letting down of his mind, of hiding a big sum of money."

"Thirty thousand dollars," interrupted the miser. "Yes, yes."

"On his deathbed he asked to have a lawyer secretly brought in. As my sister had charge of the case she naturally sent for me, telling me of a hidden fortune that he had mentioned to her on several occasions. It seems that he wanted his step-grandson to have this money. But instead of telling me where the money was hidden, he peculiarly gave me his wig, instructing me to turn it over to the step-grandson ten days after the funeral. The son, I gathered, wasn't to be trusted."

"Yes, yes," encouraged the greedy farmer.

"The wig, I figured, putting my wits to work, was the *key* to the money's hiding place. But when I took the headpiece apart I found nothing in it. In talking with the wig's maker I learned that it was less than six weeks old. Yet the money, you will recall, had been hidden for almost three months. The fogged old man, of course, had intended to give me the wig that

he had worn when the money was put away. But where was the old wig? My sister failed to find it. And now, Simonborn, comes the peculiar part of my story, which proves the old saying that the devil looks out for his own. Getting your letter I came here to see you, and to find out what I could from the boy himself. I had little thought, however, of actually getting track of the old wig. Yet such is my good fortune. . . . Do you know the Mason family?"

"Yes," came the short surly reply, accompanied by an expressive scowl.

"My other sister, Mrs. Nebber, was there this afternoon. I might say that she is a great hand to pick up news. A bit prying, in fact. In this particular case she brought home the story that one of the Mason boys had earlier found an old wig in the Barlow cottage. Later the wig was lost. Someone picked it up in the road between the Mason farm and town. Who? I can't answer that. But we'll make it our business, you and I, to find out, assuming, of course, that its finder is wearing it. For once we get our hands on it we'll have the key to the money's hiding

place. I'm as sure of that as I am of my own identity. I need your help, Simonborn. For you know the people around here, wig wearers and otherwise. If we work it right I have a hunch that you'll be wanting to shelve this orphan boy instead of adopting him."

The farmer had risen to his feet. And now a trembling hairy hand sought the top of his head. But with great difficulty he got control of himself.

As for Tod, he almost fainted as the knowledge came to him, and to Russ, too, that the wig that held the key to the money's hiding place *was on the farmer's head!*

Tall man that he was, his head came within a few inches of the low ceiling as he now stood directly under the register. So it was no trick at all for Tod to reach down and grab the loose-fitting headpiece! There was a cry of amazement from the visitor; an animal-like snarl from the defeated miser himself; then confusion. But long before the two men got into the overhead room, with its telltale open window, we were a quarter of a mile down the country road.

Afraid to go home, the boys ran all the way to town where they enlisted the help of an old friend. Dr. Madison's amazement was great when he heard their panting story. Locked in his private office, the wig was torn apart, and out dropped the paper that later led to the money's hiding place. Dr. Madison read this aloud:

> Go to Treasure Island with Jim Hawkins, start at the sign of the skull, use your feet, chapter 8 north, chapter 10 east, dig in north shadow of crow's nest.

"Treasure Island," of course, had a double meaning—it meant one of the books that Russ had taken from the cottage, of which Jim Hawkins was the leading character, and it meant the island in Funny-Bone Lake, over which Tod had roamed so many times. So it was clear to the young farmer what was meant by "the sign of the skull," for he had been one of the boys who had chiseled the somewhat crude outline of a skull into the side of the big rock on the island's summit.

The rest of the note was more confusing.

"Use your feet." What did that mean? Dr. Madison suggested that the meaning might be "to measure in feet." Hence "chapter 8 north" could very well mean as many feet north of the "skull" rock as there were pages or paragraphs in the eighth chapter of the book. It was later found that "pages" was the correct key. As for the "crow's nest," that turned out to be a tree in which some boys had built a lofty seat.

Late in the afternoon of the following day the recovered fortune of thirty-two thousand dollars in bills of large denomination was safely deposited in the Danbridge bank. The dead man's son was furious when he learned of his step-nephew's success. And he tried to recover the money. But he dropped his threatened lawsuit when a will was found that established Russ' legal claim to the money, and also to a tract of land in the northern part of the state. As for the crooked Milwaukee lawyer, the boys never saw him or heard of him again.

Aunt Judy wisely called in a surveyor before old Simonborn or Krebbs could move the iron stake. So she, too, came out all right.

To-day, thanks to Russ' generosity, the boys have a swell new shotgun and Tod has a new bicycle. As for Russ, he has a home.

Which, he says, is the best and finest of all.

. . . . . .

Here we'll leave Tuffy and his friends for the present, hopeful that you have enjoyed the story and have become more deeply attached to our splendid four-footed hero.

Dear little Tuffy! He *is* a hero, even if he was denied the opportunity of recovering the miser's wig, as he had planned so daringly. And undoubtedly he will conduct himself well in the succeeding volume of this series, thus meriting your further interest in him.

Now a regular member of Aunt Judy's family, Russ was curious about the land that he had inherited. And when Tod and Dave learned that the land was situated in the very wildest part of the state, where bears were a common sight, the farm boys, too, became curious to see it.

So the trio set out on a tour of discovery, taking guns, traps and provisions. Being the old-

est, Dave drove the little car that Russ' money had provided. And what fun they had!

TUFFY BEAN'S HUNTING DAYS. Such is the title of the book dealing with the boys' northern adventures. It is a tale of frozen lakes, hazardous icy trails and mysterious snow-bound hills.

Had you ever thought that you'd like to spend Christmas in a log cabin in the snow-bound northern woods? Br-r-r-r! The Christmas that Tuffy tells about in his skylarking book was a mighty cold one. And strange, weird dangers lurked near. But that didn't prevent loyal old Saint Nick from coming down the chimney.

For their Christmas dinner the boys ate game that they shot themselves. And in another room of the log cabin—in a *secret* room—were piles of pelts that the owner planned to sell as soon as he could haul them to market.

Who was the owner? That is a part of the mystery that Tuffy and the excited boys found themselves plunged into.

A book of laughs, thrills and shivers. And it's coming soon.

In conclusion, may we say a few words about Mr. Edwards' other books for boys and girls? First comes the Jerry Todds. You'll love Jerry, for he's a manly little square-shooter. Assisted by his true-blue pals he solves many amusing mysteries in his home town, starting with the disappearance of a strange "whispering mummy."

Jerry's bosom pal, Poppy Ott, is featured in a series of his own, all good books for boys and girls. Next comes Trigger Berg. And what fun there is for you in Mr. Edwards' jolly Trigger Berg books, for Trigger, who tells the story in diary form, is only nine years old himself.

Then, when you are ready for high school, you'll want to read Mr. Edwards' big-boy books, featuring Andy Blake. Though a man in years, this kindly author is still a boy at heart. It is because he knows boys and girls (and dogs, too!) so well that he can write such corking good books about them.

THE END

OUR CHATTER-BOX

IN THIS department, now a regular feature of my books (this is Leo Edwards speaking), we publish interesting letters written by boys and girls who enjoy my books. These young readers (we call them Jerry Todd fans) also furnish poems written for the most part around the books or the characters contained therein. In each "Chatter-Box" we publish from six to ten poems, and each of these young poets receives, as an award, an autographed copy of the particular book in which his poem appears. Writers of accepted letters do not receive awards.

Other sections of this department are given over to Club News and miscellaneous subjects. Be sure and read about our big Freckled Goldfish club. And if you are not a member, join now. It is the only club of its kind in the world.

Remember, this is *your* department. And if you would like to be represented, sit down now and write me an interesting letter. Read the letters in this "Chatter-Box." That will give you an idea of the kind of letters we prefer. And if you can write poetry—fine! We need a lot of humorous interesting poetry, for I publish several books a year.

Address all communications to Leo Edwards, Cambridge, Wisconsin.

And now let us turn to the first letter.

LETTERS

JACK SEARS, 69 Grant Ave., White Plains, N. Y., is the writer of the first letter that comes to my attention. He has a pet monkey named Jerry Todd. "And boy," says Jack, "can he raise a rumpus! You'd think an earthquake was coming. So small is he that he can sleep in a cigar box. I also have a bicycle named Tittering Totem." Which, I think, identifies Jack as a real Jerry Todd fan. Accompanying Jack's letter is a pen-and-ink sketch, supposedly of me. But I hasten to tell him publicly, and with no shame, that the top of my dome is a great deal more naked than he shows in his sketch. In conclusion here is a poem that Jack contributed:

It Takes Time

I could not write a poem
  Without a little time.
My mother makes me go to bed
  When it is half-past nine.

It was nearing nine o'clock
  When I started my letter to you.
It takes time, you know, to think,
  And it was nine-thirty before I
    knew.

While thinking up a poem
  This is the best that I could do.
So please excuse this thought
  If it's not all right with you.

"I have read all of your 'Chatter-Boxes' except the two appearing in your latest Poppy Ott and Andy Blake books," writes Glen Whitaker, 4105 College Ave., Kansas City, Mo. "The two that I read to-day are the ones in your initial Trigger Berg books. I think the idea is peachy. My sister's cat has four kittens, named Poppy, Trigger, Tail Light and Jerry. I induced my dad to read the first chapter in your 'Oak Island Treasure' book. He liked the book very much and is going to finish it, he says. I have a football team and we lost our first game recently, 18 to 6. I made the only touchdown on my team. After reading your Comet Coaster book all of the kids in my neighborhood wanted Comet Coasters, although we knew we couldn't get them. I think John Giedel's idea of having felt pictures of Jerry and Poppy to go on the front of sweaters and bathing suits is nifty. Have Bert Salg make the pictures. I sure like his drawings. Wish I had a picture of him. Tell Jerry that recently I was Editor-in-chief of our school paper, the *Searchlight.* It wasn't a hard job. My English teacher complimented me on my work—so I was luckier than poor Jerry."

Also Glen names certain cheap magazines, asking me if he should read such publications. His father said no. And I say no, too. Boys are foolish to fill their minds with published trash. Read good books and good magazines. And how nice it was of Glen to sign his letter, "Your pal, buddy and admirer." I sure appreciate that.

"I received your letter to-day," writes Sylvia Benjamin, Freckled Goldfish 7153, 1881 Walton Ave., New York, N. Y. "It was a big surprise. I never thought you'd take the time to write to me."

It isn't always possible for me to give personal attention to all of the letters that I receive, but I try to answer as many of them as possible; and I do answer all of the important ones. If a boy or girls writes to me, I feel they are entitled to an answer.

Thomas Euston of 987 E. 17 St., Brooklyn, N. Y., is F. G. No. 2503. In his letter he gives an interesting account of his experiences in a summer camp.

"Why can't Bert Salg draw a map of Tutter and Oak Island," he suggests. And my answer is, we're going to have a map of the entire Tutter district, including old Cap'n Tinkertop's potato patch, in "Jerry Todd, Caveman."

Having joined our Goldfish club, Ruth Sander, 22 Roosevelt Ave., Valley Stream, L. I., N. Y., writes as follows:

"Instead of acting like I was twenty, and reading love stories, I much prefer to read stories with lots of fun and mystery in them. I have read all of the Jerry Todd books, except Editor-in-Grief. And I'm reading that now. I got it from a circulating library. It is falling apart (meaning the book and not the library), so it must have been read a lot. Can you use cartoons as well as poems?"

We haven't used any cartoons yet, feeling that if we reduced them in size to fit our columns we'd lose the detail. We may use cartoons later on when we're better equipped to handle them. But I keep a personal collection of such material sent to me. In fact I have a wonderful exhibit of small gifts from my many boy and girl friends. So anything that you send in, either written or drawn, will be very welcome.

"A boy friend of mine named Bentley Hamill and I have a Jerry Todd gang," writes Max Kerby, 303 Corunna Ave., Corunna, Mich. "We try to have adventures like Jerry and go camping quite often on a river near our home."

Watson Falks, Route 12, Strong, Ark., wants us to publish a regular newspaper, like the one Jerry started in "Editor-in-Grief." I'm afraid, though, that not many boys would care to pay two dollars a year for such a publication, as Watson suggests. So that's that. But recently I saw a similar newspaper published by some boys, who were "inspired" by the "Editor-in-Grief" book. I'm going to mention that newspaper in a later "Chatter-Box." It sure was a fine piece of work. And the advertisements were even funnier than the ones Jerry wrote.

"I just finished reading 'Andy Blake's Secret Service,'" writes Milend J. Childs, 219 Weston Ave., Aurora, Ill. "The book sure was interesting. I wonder if you can't start a series of books featuring Eddie Garry. I liked Eddie and I'd like to read more about him. If you will start writing the Eddie Garry books I'll buy all of them. Laura Salzar was peaches and cream. The first of your books that I read was 'Poppy Ott and the Stuttering Parrot.' From then on I bought your books two or three at a time. I now have the complete set."

I've written about many boys. But the boy I loved the most, when I was writing about him, was Eddie Garry, the main character in "Andy Blake's Secret Service." I might add, too, that Laura Salzar is a real girl. Much of the material in this story is true.

Howard Burton, Sulligent, Ala., doesn't know yet whether he's going to be a novelist, artist, cartoonist, pianist, diver, poet, bookkeeper or printer—for he has qualified, in some definite measure, in all of these arts and sciences. My opinion is that he'll turn out to be a village dog catcher.

"Your books have given me many hours of pleasure," writes Charles Grimshaw, 623 N. Beard St., Shawnee, Okla. "Many times I have laughed till my sides ached; and even after I had stopped reading I would think of something funny and start laughing again. Also I want to join the Goldfish club."

"I think there are no greater enthusiasts over your Jerry Todd and Poppy Ott books than myself and chums," writes Clifford Hesse, 2679 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y. "We try to imitate your characters as much as possible. One time we started saving money so that we could travel to Tutter

and go camping with Jerry on Oak Island. I hope when I have a beard reaching to my knees that I can still be waiting for a new book by Leo Edwards."

Paul W. Drew of 771 Boulevard, Westfield, N. J., is both a writer and an artist. I've read some of his printed newspaper contributions; and in his letter are many clever drawings. Paul is making a goldfish pool. I have a drawing of the pool. That interests me. For recently I spent nine weeks making a rock garden, in which I have a small pool. Some day I'm going to publish a little book about this garden—but I still have much work to do on it, so the book won't appear very soon. Among other things I built a fountain, grotto, limestone garden, flower bank and wild-flower ravine. I never did anything that I got more pleasure from. First I gathered rocks. Oh, the tons of rocks that I carried home! The old Essex groaned. I had rocks hauled in on trucks. I had dirt hauled in; and poor dirt hauled out. Our back yard at Lake Ripley (just out of Cambridge) looked like a wreck. But it looks pretty good now. If, like Paul, you are interested in rock gardens, I hope that you'll stop some time and see my garden.

And now let us drop the general letters for the time being and see what we have in poems.

POEMS

TOM LEWIS, 1926 Octavia St., New Orleans, La., is the writer of the first accepted poem. It's a pretty good poem, I think, and deserving of an award.

Jerry Todd and Poppy Ott

Jerry Todd books are among the best,
And so are the Poppy Otts.
Everytime I read these books
They make me laugh a lot.

I've never read a Trigger Berg
Or yet an Andy Blake.
But I hope to read these books
Before it is too late.

I know a little remedy
That chases the blues a lot.
It's to read a book of Jerry Todd
Or one of Poppy Ott.

The next accepted poem was written by Ed Post, Jr., Box 57, Shelby, N. C.

Oh! Listen my children and you shall hear
Of a goat that would butt any ghost that was near.
On that night in the tavern, in the dead of night,
Rusty, Turk and Buddy all got a fright,
For down the stairs there came a ghost,
Nor did the boys like this ghostly host.
But don't get excited, for Butts was there
And the ghost got a butt that nearly uprooted its hair.
George, it turned out, was the ghost-boy's name.
In "Andy Blake and the Pot of Gold," George gains his fame.

Fred W. Amann, Goldfish No. 2097, living at 1018 N. Karlov Ave., Chicago, Ill., is the writer of the next poem.

A Tribute to Jerry and Poppy

Jerry Todd was first created,
Then Poppy Ott became acquainted
To the readers of your books.
Shivery wails and ghostly nooks
They encounter in their fun,
But when there's a task or errand,
Across the vale or hill,
They never refuse their parents,
But set to it with a will.

This one was written by Harry Coleman, Box 535, Pikeville, Ky.

Who

Who is so funny?
Who is so wise?
Who caused old Ivory Dome
An awful case of hives?

Who rode the "Galloping Snail"
Through a place worse than jail?
And then came out in the end
With mighty Goliath for a friend?

Who is always on the dot?
You guessed it—it's Poppy Ott!

This poem isn't very long—but length doesn't count. It was written by Billy Phillips, 328 Augusta Ave., Dekalb, Ill.

At the Jerry Todds I've laughed and laughed,
I wish I had one autographed
By the finest man, next to my dad,
Who writes the books that make me glad.

Murray Missbaum, 861 Stebbins Ave., New York, N. Y., is the author of this one.

How much dough has Red's uncle got?
That guy must have an awful lot.
But why did Mr. Meyers send Bingo back?
For Red's sake I'd give him an awful crack.

In the Poppy Ott books there's Jerry Todd.
But in Jerry's books do I find Poppy Ott?
Jerry's books would be a whole lot better
If they contained that old go-getter.

Scoop acts like he is deaf and dumb.
Why doesn't he talk some?
I hope in your next book will be
Poppy, Jerry, Red, Peg and Scoop Ellery.

Here's another short one, written by Fred Clough, Jr., 15 First Ave., Auburn, Maine.

There is a guy named Andy Blake,
And, believe me, he is no fake.
The author also writes Poppy Ott,
And every kid likes these a lot.

Poppy and Jerry have a pile of fun;
For when they come along Bid Stricker does run.
One night Bid with tomatoes they did paste,
And Bid ran away in pretty hot haste.
He started down the street pell-mell,

And went down and soaked himself in the canal.

This very short one was written by Harold Moran, 4148 N. Mozart St., Chicago, Ill.

Jerry Todd and Poppy Ott
Are wonderful boys, you know.
They will make you shiver and make you laugh
Wherever you happen to go.

Robert Dalzell is another Chicago boy who has broken into our "Poem" column. He lives at 6925 S. Oakley Ave. And here is his contribution.

The Gang

There is a guy called Scoop Ellery,
The leader of the gang is he.
Next to him comes Jerry Todd,
A funny guy and very odd.

Then, of course, there's big Peg Shaw,
The boys tell him he eats beefsteak raw.
Of course, there must be freckled Red Meyers,
A funny gink, whose hair is red as fire.

I wait patiently, day by day,
Years and years seem to pass away.
Then all of a sudden I let out a shout.
Why? A new Jerry Todd book is out.

A member of our School club, George Ray, Jr., 1458 S. Gordon St., Atlanta, Ga., contributes this one.

There's a town named Crocketville
In the state of Illinois,
Where lives the gang of Trigger Berg,
Consisting of four boys.

This gang also had a goat,
His name was Dynamite,
And every time anyone looked at him
He showed signs of fight.

Also there was Pancake,
The dumbest "mule" of all.
He was so flat and skinny
Every one thought he'd surely fall.

Between these boys and animals,
And their many funny scraps,
Leo Edwards keeps you interested in
Trigger Berg and His 700 Mouse Traps.

And how's this one, written by Bud Drake, 53 Hillside Ave., Short Hills, N. J.

The Ship of My Dreams

I saw a ship a-sailing—
A-sailing in my dreams.
And on it some gobs a-bailing,
And a lot of boys, it seems.

On this ship, as I said before,
Were a lot of boys, just boys galore,
I can't remember just who was who,
But I'll name a few just for you.

There was Poppy Ott
And Jerry Todd,
And Red and Rory,
Like two peas in a pod.

There was Bill Hadley
And the Cap'n, too,
And Caleb Obed
Who (in checkers) would cheat even you.

And there was Bid Stricker
Making faces at me.
You know, that guy can always
Be as mean as mean can be.

And there was Jimmy Stricker
With the rest of the Zulutown gang.
Boy, how I'd like to knock 'em all
And make 'em fall down kerbang!

And there was Scoop Ellery,
Our cracker-jack leader so far.
And there was old Husky,
Who didn't get a ride in the Galloping Snail car.

And there was Ruth Danver,
The prettiest girl Jerry ever had seen.
She was standing with her uncle,
Who got cracked over the bean.

And there was the Whispering Mummy,
Who whispered at the top of its voice.
To be around it in dark or daylight
I'd take a careful choice.

So now my dream is ended,
And I say good-by to my friends.
To put on the finishing touch I'll write:
"And so my story ends."

PICTURES

A GREAT many boys and girls send me pictures of themselves and their pets. I have a great pile of pictures here in front of me. I can't mention all of them in this "Chatter-Box." But I'll mention a great many.

But first let me give you a letter written by Bob Alexander, 6 Franklin St., Watertown, Mass.

"I have a great idea," writes Bob, who also sent me his picture. "The people who publish your books also publish the Roy Blakely books, on the back of which there is a picture of the author, Percy Keese Fitzhugh. Probably he had many letters asking for pictures, so the publishers took this way of letting boys and girls see what he looks like. As many boys and girls ask you for pictures, why don't you do the same? I ask you to try this, not only for myself but for the many readers of your books who are disappointed each year when they can't get a picture of you."

Well, Bob, it may be that Grosset & Dunlap will get careless some day and spread my mug around in some of their advertising. But don't expect too much! Just now they're asking ten cents for one of my super-gorgeous autographed photographs. And not wanting to spoil possible sales, I won't say anything! But if you want to take a chance, send ten cents in stamps to Leo Edwards' Secretary, Grosset & Dunlap, 1140 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Harold Wey, Quanah, Texas, is a fine-looking lad, as his picture proves. Most boys send me snapshots; but Harold sent me a par-

ticularly fine picture, and for that reason I mention him first of all.

Next is a picture of Stanley Deck and his grandmother. Stanley lives in Lebanon, Pa., at 149 N. 8th St. He's a mighty pleasing boy to look at. Here's a poem that accompanied his letter and picture:

Goldfish Morals

A Freckled Goldfish is very neat,
And when you meet one upon the street
You will always get a cheerful reply—
And Freckled Goldfish never lie!

A Freckled Goldfish always wears a grin,
And never needlessly hits guys on the chin.
You know what I mean—so don't fight,
And always be very polite.

In the next picture there is a boy and a dog. But it's easy to tell them apart. I dare say the dog's name is Rover; and the boy's name is Johnny Sheldon. A real boy, if you were to ask me. And if I ever visit Huntington, Indiana, where he lives, I'll surely look him up. Before the "Prancing Pancake" book appeared, Johnny wrote the following story:

Poppy Ott and the Prancing Pancake

That morning Poppy was baking pancakes. All at once a pancake leaped off the griddle onto the floor. Poppy was so surprised he sat down in the batter. I was up in a flash and yelled for Poppy to follow. I saw the pancake disappear around the corner toward Sing Lung's laundry. Sing Lung was coming down the street. When he saw the pancake he dropped his bundles and fled. When Poppy and I reached the laundry the pancake had disappeared. We searched Sing Lung's living rooms, but found nothing. We opened the cellar door and went down the stairs. There we found a hole in the floor, but we found no pancake. So we went upstairs and called Bill Hadley, the town marshal. Bill came to the laundry right away. We took him down in the cellar and showed him the hole, but to our astonishment we found Sing Lung unconscious beside the hole. So we called Doc Leland. "Um—" says Doc. By this time the news had spread all over town about the pancake running away. People began to collect in front of Sing Lung's laundry. Finally Poppy and I descended into the hole. "Poppy," I whispered, "it's the old storm sewer." "What's a storm sewer?" says Poppy. "It was built when dad was a boy, and was used to carry off the flood waters from College Hill," says I. And then I further explained that the first cloudburst had filled it with tons of gravel. We followed the sewer until we came under the Commercial Bank, where someone had dug a hole leading upward. We went back to get Bill, who was still at the laundry looking for finger prints

on the bars of laundry soap. Bill was so excited he swallowed his false teeth. He thought he was going to capture a bank robber. But we found out that men who were repairing the bank vault, where some Chinamen had earlier tried to rob the bank, had made the hole. So we still had the mystery of the prancing pancake to clear up. Later we found out that Chester Rainbow had put popcorn in the pancake batter, causing the pancakes to flop on the floor and start rolling. Later we found the pancake down at the end of the sewer near the canal bank. So our mystery was cleared up at last. We then got Red Meyers, the best rotten-egg pitcher in Tutter, to paste Chester Rainbow, who later accompanied six rotten eggs out of town.

Barney Devietti, Box 232, Helper, Utah, is shown in the next picture, beside another young man from New Mexico. Also, there is a separate picture of Barney's dog, named Tag. Barney is no kid. He must be at least seventeen years old; yet he tells me, in a very interesting letter, that he still reads the Jerry Todds and Poppy Otts.

Having had several letters from Dick Barry, 69–12 78 St., Ridgewood Sta., L. I., N. Y., I'm glad now to have a picture of him. I think he's wearing his father's pants. But that's all right. Pa probably is out in the back yard cutting the grass in his bathing suit, and hence doesn't need pants. You see, I can get real funny with Dick, for he plans to be an author some day—and authors, of course, are just as chummy as sardines.

My, my! This next chap certainly isn't skinny. James Downs, is the name, and the address is Carey St., Newport, R. I. Jim has a Freckled Goldfish chapter. And he informs me that he's the young artist who painted the Goldfish pennant that I received recently. Probably it will interest Jim to know that my boy took this pennant to college with him; but it's back home now. Members of Jim's chapter are Alfred Ouellette, Bernard Otway, Thomas Madden and Joseph Madden.

Fred Loco, Freckled Goldfish 4307, 1040 Cherry St., Winnetka, Ill., is the lad who next comes up for mention. What I mistlook for a fly on his nose is probably a wart.

Then comes Joseph Parsons, 206 N. Second St., Darby, Pa.—he's shooting at something with a gun —probably a Waltzing Hen. Then comes Bobby Hodge, 145 So. Center St., South Orange, N. J.—I hope I didn't forget to send him the autograph he asked for; and then Jack Carberry looks back at me with his very best grin, informing me that *he*, too, wants to be an author. Dear, dear! I'm going to have lots of competition later on. Most of the chaps that I'm writing about are Freckled Goldfish, including this next chap, Kenneth R. Lewis, 1119 Tyler St., Topeka, Kansas. Howdy, Ken! No, I didn't die of heart failure when I got your picture—I just

sneezed. You can't kill me that easy!

Eugene Smoleroff, Goldfish No. 6645, living at 2508 Frisby Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y., is shown in the next picture with his brother, who, I am told, is a "pain in the neck." Eugene says he was run over three times by automobiles, but I can't see that they flattened him out any.

Herman Lang, Goldfish No. 2675, living at 1564 Crotona Park, East Bronx, New York, N. Y., has contributed both a picture and a poem. Herman looks very tough in the picture; and I wondered at this, till I read in his letter that he was a "crook" in a recent play, and had his picture taken in costume. Here's his poem:

Wasn't it funny on that day
When they took old Cassibaum Kepp away
And left the gang in charge of the "Times,"
About this I'm writing rhymes.

When Sitting Bull one day skinned out,
Red Meyers (that big lout!)
Offered to take his place on the totem pole,
But later they found only an empty hole.

LETTER PALS

IF YOU live in the east, would you like a letter pal in the west or south? If so, why not write to some of the contributors in this "Chatter-Box?" Their addresses are provided for that purpose.

Western boys in turn may want to write to eastern boys. Or, if you do not find what you want in this "Chatter-Box," try the one in "Jerry Todd, Caveman," or some of the other recent books.

SCHOOL CLUB

DO YOU belong to this club? It's easy to be a member. All you have to do is to take one of my books to school, induce the teacher to read it aloud, or let you read it aloud, reporting the matter to me, after which your name will be included in the club file. This club has nothing to do with the big Freckled Goldfish club.

The names of all members were published in the "Chatter-Boxes" in "Trigger Berg and the Sacred Pig" and "Trigger Berg and the Cockeyed Ghost." Also the names of prize winners were published. Here's the general plan: At the end of the first year (following the club's organization) the names of all members were "put into the hat" and ten names drawn. Each of these ten boys and girls received an autographed copy of the "Sacred Pig." At the end of the second year, twenty names were drawn. This group of names was published in "Cockeyed Ghost." At the end of the third year thirty names will be drawn, omitting the names of earlier prize winners. Here is a fine chance for you to secure a free autographed book. Not only that, but if you take one of your Todd, Ott, Berg or Bean books to school, and it is read aloud, you'll provide fun for the

whole room. That's something to think about.

"The teacher in our class," writes Louis Cartwright, 810 McNeil Ave., Inwood, L. I., N. Y., "has read every single book of the Jerry Todd series except the 'Elephant' book, and every book in the Poppy Ott series except 'Freckled Goldfish.' Just now she's reading 'Stuttering Parrot.' "

"Yesterday the teacher didn't know that we'd get through with our work so quickly," writes Albert Morgan, Jr., 147–31 Hoover Ave., Jamaica, N. Y. "So she didn't have anything to read. She then asked who had a good book. I said I had, and I gave her 'Trigger Berg and His 700 Mouse Traps.' Boy, she couldn't stop the class from laughing."

"Recently I was required to make a report on books," writes Raymond Edwards, 1904 So. "O" St., Fort Smith, Ark. "I asked the teacher if the 'Jerry Todd' books were satisfactory to report on. She read a chapter in one of the books, and said they were satisfactory."

"I'm in a terrible fix," writes Jack Reed, 304 Arthur St., Liberty, Mo. "I have lost my Freckled Goldfish card. So please send me another, and also a button. I now belong to the School club, for I had our teacher read every Todd and Ott book that I possess."

"Through my personal efforts," writes Robert C. Linderman, 200 Broadway, Hicksville, L. I., N. Y., "my teacher read 'Jerry Todd, Pirate.' So be sure and record me as a member of the School club."

"I read 'Jerry Todd, Pirate,' aloud in our class at school," writes Sidney Younkman, 2016 No. Bond St., Saginaw, Mich. "That makes me a member of the School club."

"I have four separate purposes in writing to you," reports Shirley Bloch, 2129 Coney Island Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y. "First, I want to join the Goldfish club. Also I want to join the School club. I want to send in some poetry. And I want to give myself the pleasure of writing to you. Recently our teacher was ill and we had a substitute, who didn't know what to give us for our reading lesson. She said, 'Children, this afternoon bring a good book to read.' I thought of 'Trigger Berg and His 700 Mouse Traps.' I brought it to school and was soon quietly reading. Suddenly a laugh split the silence of the room. It was me! I felt so embarrassed. I had reached the part where the boys were initiating Pickles and Trigger's dad is knocked through the side of the barn by the goat. The teacher asked me what I was laughing about. I told her, and soon we were having the most pleasant reading lesson we ever had known, for the teacher was reading Trigger Berg aloud. We had a club called the Outdoor Girls, but our leader joined the Freckled Goldfish and got the initiation rituals which tell about meetings and we are only waiting for our membership cards to start our club. I am to be Silver Fin when the club is started."

And here's Shirley's poem:

Jerry Todd, Doctor

There was a little boy and his name was Tommy Green
And wherever he was his chum was to be seen.
His chum was a boy and his name was Johnny Brown;
They always were together, when they went into town.

One day John went to Tommy's house and Tom was sitting still,
He sat and looked so very sad, of course he must be ill.
He said to John: "I feel so sad! Oh, everything is awful bad!"
Did Johnny get a doctor? Oh, no, no! He knew just what to do and where to go.

He went to a book store and bought a Jerry Todd,
And when I tell you why, you won't think it is odd.
He gave the book to Tommy and Tom read all the news—
He read the book and laughed a lot and chased away the blues.

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away,"
That maxim is all dead.
"A Todd book a day keeps Old Man Blues away,"
That's right, now my piece I've said.

FRECKLED GOLDFISH

OUR FRECKLED GOLDFISH club is several years old. Poppy Ott started the club. He and Jerry had a similar club in their book, "Poppy Ott and the Freckled Goldfish." Even before the book was published informed young letter pals of mine were asking me if they could get up branch clubs like Poppy's. That gave me an idea. Why not organize a national club, calling it the Secret and Mysterious Order of the Freckled Goldfish, taking in members from coast to coast. "Fine!" said my publisher, when I presented the idea. So membership cards designed by Bert Salg were prepared, and soon the requests for membership began to roll in. Members then wanted pins. These were provided. Then we published a little booklet called a ritual, to help boys and girls who wanted to organize branch clubs.

To-day we have over 11,000 members in our club. Also we have several hundred branch clubs, all of which are providing boys and girls with added fun. I've attended many club meetings and I want to tell you that the young organizers of these clubs know their stuff. A boy or girl who can get up a club like that, and make a success of it, is a real leader. And if you want to be a leader, here is your chance to show what you can do.

To join the club simply observe the following rules:

(1) Print your name plainly.
(2) Supply your complete printed address.
(3) Give your age.
(4) Enclose two two-cent U. S. postage stamps.
(5) Address your letter to
Leo Edwards,
Cambridge,
Wisconsin.

Remember that each new member receives a unique membership card designed by Bert Salg, the popular illustrator of these books. Containing a comical picture of Poppy's Freckled Goldfish, together with our secret rules (the picture and the rules are printed on the card), each card also bears my own personal autograph. Also each member receives a club pin, thus distinguishing him as a Freckled Goldfish.

LOCAL CHAPTERS

ANY BOY who wants to start a Freckled Goldfish club in his own neighborhood can't afford to be without the official ritual. This booklet tells how to organize the club, how to conduct the meetings, how to transact all club business, and, probably most important of all, how to initiate candidates.

The complete initiation is given, word for word. Naturally these booklets are more or less secret. So, if you send for one, please do not show it to anyone who isn't a Freckled Goldfish. The initiation will fall flat if the candidate knows what is coming. Three chief officers will be required to put on the initiation, which can be given in any boy's home, so, unless each officer is provided with a booklet, much memorizing will have to be done. The best plan is to have three booklets to a chapter. These may be secured (at cost) at six cents each (three two-cent stamps) or three for sixteen cents (eight two-cent stamps). Address all orders to Leo Edwards, Cambridge, Wisconsin.

CLUB NEWS

I AM A member of the Freckled Goldfish club," writes Thomas Cragan, 121 Cedar St., Maryville, Tenn. "The other day I lost my button, so please send me another. To-day I got 'Trigger Berg and the Treasure Tree' from Clyde Walker, who is a Freckled Goldfish."

"The other evening my chum, Ed Stephanson, suggested that we shoot paper wads at each other across the street," reports Wesley Cox, 8942 134 St., Richmond Hill, N. Y. "So we got the necessary rubber bands and fought it out. This reminded me of Jerry Todd and his big slingshot. I mentioned it to Ed. He has read your books. Then we got to talking about the Goldfish club. Ed suggested starting a branch club. We have a few boys already who want to join."

Lenore Turovlin, 1842 Humboldt Blvd., Chicago, Ill., seems to think that girls are not permitted to join the Freckled Goldfish club. That is not the case at all. In fact, some of our best-organized branch clubs are managed by girls. Lenore's brother Leonard belongs to a branch club, and he should have accepted his little sister into that club. Anyway, we're sending her a membership card and button.

Out in Helena, Montana, there is a branch club containing eight members. Jack Palmquist is the chief official; then comes Earnest

Palmquist, Bill Wheatly, Clifton Stebbins, Otto Krieg, Clayton Baker, Harold Wheatly and Delbert Manlove. The club has a complete set of Todd and Blake books, which, according to report, are much used. One of the members reports as follows: "We collect dues of five cents weekly to help pay for our big feed each Saturday. When we organized we were known as the Owl's club. Now we are called the Jerry Todd club."

"I am writing this letter immediately after our second successful meeting," reports Tom Lincoln, 539 West 12th St., Bentonville, Ark. "In our first meeting we elected officers. We now have six members and two more will be initiated soon. Also we have a strong box, with a good lock, in which we keep our papers and signs. In our initiation we have a lot of fun, having added some things to the regular initiation. We haven't any weekly dues, but collect dues as we need the money."

"Having joined the Freckled Goldfish club," reports Mary Ellen McDaniel, 1533 No. 3rd, Abilene, Texas, "I want to organize a branch club, so am enclosing the necessary stamps for one of the rituals."

Bob Mason, 4453 So. Harvey Ave., Western Springs, Ill., has an up-and-coming branch club. Two new members are Harold Mason and Jack Willet. This club has "degrees," which they have worked out themselves. So, from Freckled Goldfish, they become Deep Sea Fish, Sharks, Sailfish, etc.

Jack Herb, 3400 Allendale St., Pittsburgh, Pa., is the head of a club newspaper called the *Goldfish Monthly*. I have a copy on my desk, and it is a very neat little publication, containing news of the club and intimate facts about the members. The first copy of the magazine was made on a typewriter. But later the club hopes to buy a small press.

And now I'll end this "Chatter-Box" with a poem by Richard Barry, 69–12 78th St., Ridgewood Sta., L. I., N. Y.

A Complaint and a Request

Oh! The great Leo Edwards,
  A mighty man is he.
I really hope he's kind enough
  To listen to my plea.

Dear Leo: I got a Goldfish card
  From you some months ago,
And there's something "fishy" about it
  That I want you to know.

I carried it 'round in my pocket
  Till I wore off all the paint,
And it got thinner and thinner,
  Till now the poor card "jist ain't."

Now, couldn't you make the cards gilt-edged,
  Or make them out of tin,
Or give me some kind of protection
  To carry my card around in?

You've done me lots of favors,
  I think you'll do one more.
At least, if you don't grant my request,
  I ask you: "Don't get sore!"

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Would you like to know what became of the good friends you have made in this book?

Would you like to read other stories continuing their adventures and experiences, or other books quite as entertaining by the same author?

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JERRY TODD AND THE TALKING FROG
JERRY TODD AND THE PURRING EGG
JERRY TODD IN THE WHISPERING CAVE
JERRY TODD, PIRATE
JERRY TODD AND THE BOB-TAILED ELEPHANT
JERRY TODD, EDITOR-IN-GRIEF
JERRY TODD, CAVEMAN

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POPPY OTT AND THE SEVEN LEAGUE STILTS
POPPY OTT AND THE GALLOPING SNAIL
POPPY OTT'S PEDIGREED PICKLES
POPPY OTT AND THE FRECKLED GOLDFISH
POPPY OTT AND THE TITTERING TOTEM
POPPY OTT AND THE PRANCING PANCAKE

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TUFFY BEAN AT FUNNY-BONE FARM
TUFFY BEAN AND THE LOST FORTUNE

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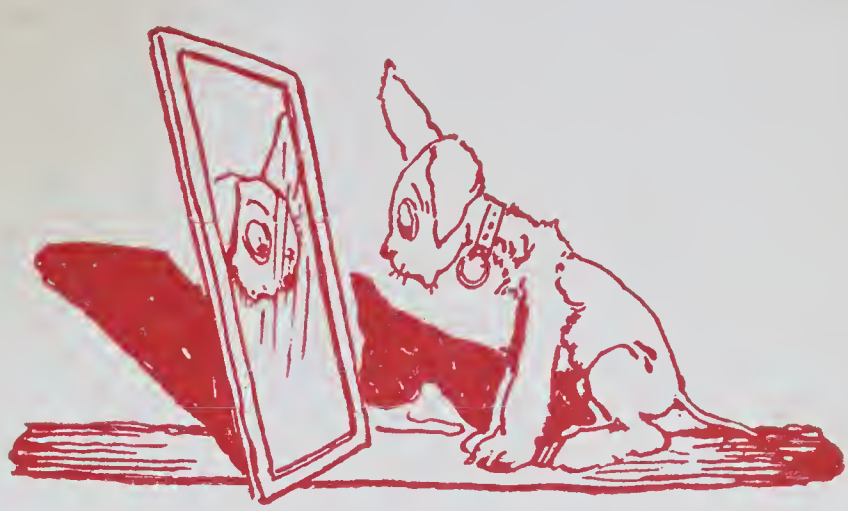
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